LIAM O'FLAHERTY

TWO YEARS

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TWO YEARS

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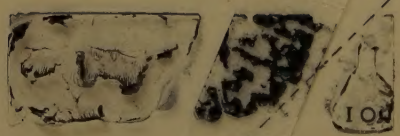

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LIAM O'FLAHERTY

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Two Years

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	I GO TO LONDON	9
II.	THE BREWERY	19
III.	THE HOTEL	28
IV.	THE EMBANKMENT	49
V.	THE OFFICE	63
VI.	I GO TO SEA	75
VII.	THE STOKEHOLD	88
VIII.	KNOCKED OUT BY STOKER JONES	103
IX.	ON THE BEACH	114
X.	SLEEPING OUT	133
XI.	AN EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION	146
XII.	I GO EAST	161
XIII.	SMYRNA	175
XIV.	DELIRIUM TREMENS	209
XV.	I BECOME A HOBO	216
XVI.	THE FACTORY	235
XVII.	THE LUMBER WOODS	252
XVIII.	THE NICKEL MINES	264
XIX.	THE BACKWOODSMAN'S DAUGHTER	276
XX.	I GO TO BOSTON	286
XXI.	I SPEND THE WINTER IN BOSTON	298
XXII.	MORE JOBS	311
XXIII.	GREENWICH VILLAGE	321
XXIV.	I LEAVE NEW YORK	333
XXV.	I RETURN HOME	349

TWO YEARS

CHAPTER ONE

I GO TO LONDON

I REALLY left home in August 1918, as far as I can remember, in order to visit my sister in Tyrone. I found the country extremely dull, depressing, and alien. My sister had changed; or rather, I had changed so much since I had last seen her that she had on me a violently disturbing effect. To sensitive people relatives are always extremely difficult; they are especially difficult at a distance from home. At home the earth and the multitude of objects and associations remembered from childhood form a bond between one and one's relatives. But on alien ground there is nothing to show the continuity between childhood and maturity. And looking at a grown person that one knew and played with as a child, one thinks:

'What is there in common between me and this person that is so like me and yet so different? Obviously nothing.'

So I suddenly arose and went to Dublin, deciding to cut myself adrift from everybody I knew. I was under an assumed name; the name I used in the army. For some reason or other I wanted to learn shorthand and typewriting. I joined a business college, and remained there a fortnight: a period sufficient to teach

anyone of normal intelligence these trivial accomplishments. But the system was so bad, and the intelligence of the pupils so low that it was impossible to learn either. So one day, instead of going to the class, I went to a race meeting at Baldoyle. I took a tramcar from the city. When I arrived on the course, I had a five-pound note and twopence. That was all the money I had in the world, except my army pension, which amounted to twenty-two shillings and sixpence a week.

The horses had gone to the post, and the bookmakers were crying:

'Are you all done now? Are you all done? Three to one the field I lay.'

There were just a few seconds left to bet. I rushed up to a bookmaker who was preparing to pick up his field-glasses and watch the start.

'Three dollars Golden Fleece,' I gasped.

At threes that excellent horse seemed a certainty to me in spite of his weight. So I was going to risk fifteen shillings on him, quite a sum of money, you will understand, for a man who had only five pounds in the world, and no means of earning a livelihood. But the bookmaker looked at my five-pound note and yelled:

'What the name of the three . . . sons of a . . . Chilian . . . do you take me for? I've no time to change fivers for a tanner bet.'

'All right,' I cried angrily. 'Three fivers Golden Fleece.'

'Eh?' said the bookmaker, rather doubtfully, and then he passed on the bet to his clerk.

I received my slip with a hand that trembled slightly,

put my hands in my pockets, and stood as still as a statue. If I lost, I'd have to walk back to Dublin, and have nothing to eat for four days. I might even have to return home to the Aran Islands.

That race seemed to last a year. I heard the horses thunder past the stands the first time round the course, the swishing of their bellies against the brushwood of the jump, the splash of a hind hoof, fallen short, in the water, the ever-loudening murmurs of the people. All these sounds seemed to be very distant and in no way connected with the race or with the fate of my money. And then the murmur increased to a shout. People began to call on their horses. There were occasional 'Ah–h–hs' as one horse after another fell. And then came those terrible moments of fierce excitement, excitement almost unendurable to the gambler, the finish of a good race.

'There are only two horses in it,' cried a bookmaker.

I raised my head and cried:

'What?'

I stood on tiptoe and looked. The Tsar and Golden Fleece were racing neck to neck up the straight. Then I also began to yell, for apart from the money I had staked on him, Golden Fleece was an old favourite of mine, and I am one of those that maintain he would have won the Galway Plate if Semper Idem had never raced at Tramore, and had come fresh to Ballybrit. My tongue had swollen with excitement by the time the judge gave Golden Fleece the verdict.

'Twenty pounds,' I said, handing my bookmaker the slip.

He muttered something very foul under his breath and paid me, cursing his clerk. As he was handing me the last greasy, tattered note, he rattled some silver in his bag, looked fiercely at the crowd around him, and cried:

'Look at them. All the corpses in Glasnevin rose from their graves to come and back the bogey.'[1]

I stuffed my money into my pocket, kept my hand on it, and actually ran from the course. I took a cab back to Dublin, went to my lodgings, paid my landlady, packed my bag, and took another cab to Westland Row station. There I waited until the boat train left for Kingstown. I arrived in London next morning, very excited, conscious that I was beginning the great adventure about which I had dreamt all my life, practically, my attempt to conquer the world; for indeed, for each individual, the expression of his personality to a satisfactory degree is the conquest of the world, since the world only contains what we desire from it.

I have always hated carrying things about with me. So I left my luggage – one suitcase – at the railway station. Then I wandered into London. I had almost fifteen pounds in my pocket. Therefore, I had no care for the future. As long as my money lasted I could live freely, absolutely independent of all other human beings. I could keep absolutely silent if I wished, opening my mouth merely to demand food and a bed. Or, using my money as a bait, I could purchase the companionship of the poor. And I could indulge in the

[1] Racing slang for 'The favourite.'

mood that has always brought me most happiness, the mood of almost gloomy meditation.

And what a wonderful place London is for this mood. I have seen most of the important cities of the world, but London always remains to me as the *only* city in the world. It approximates most closely to the wonderful cities of the East that one read about in childhood, Babylon, Bagdad, and Byzantium. Its majestic size satisfies the human craving for something that is eternal because it is too vast for comprehension in its entirety. Its inhabitants, drawn from all the quarters of the world, give the correct impression of its being the centre of the world. Its solid and massive public buildings give the impression of power. The gentleness and good nature of the common people give one that feeling of security which is the necessary basis for the enjoyment of life in a city. Here, even the police inspire one with confidence and a feeling that human beings are innately addicted to a passion for peace, justice, and good-fellowship. There is none of that raucous babbling of mobs in streets, that continuous jostling and senseless hurry which makes Paris so unpleasant to a man who is in the habit of thinking as he walks a city's pavements and requires as great as possible a degree of physical leisure to examine the buildings, the faces of those that pass, and the phenomena which are continually presenting themselves to the eyes. London has the appearance of a well-ordered feudal mansion, its centre being the dwelling of the lord and his family, its poor quarters the dwellings of the menials. And its increase, from a small town to

the greatest city the world has ever seen, has deprived it of none of the qualities of its antiquity. Both its old streets and the grandeur of its civic functions still retain the pleasant romance of the past.

It was only natural for a man of my temperament, let loose with a sum of money (even though it was a small sum) in this city, that feeds my imagination as wine feeds the tongue of a nervous woman, to forget the future as long as he had the means of enjoying its pleasures. By nature I find real pleasure only in thought and in the observation of life. When I move myself or become engaged in any form of complex activity it is merely in response to the desire of my body for exercise; it is never with a desire for achievement. I have never performed any social act except on the spur of necessity. While I have money I cease to concern myself with earning more until I have spent what I have. Because I carry the home of my ambition within me and not without as other men conceive it, enclosed within walls, with wives, children, social position, wealth of all kinds, I am unhappy only when I am forced by the encroachments of society to change my course from the limitless circuit of my brooding. Even now when I am weaving tales, a business most suited to my nature, I am unhappy because I have to sell them in order to buy leisure for weaving more. I have sometimes to think of the future.

My money lasted forty-eight hours. There was no reason why it should have lasted even eight hours or should not have lasted forty-eight weeks. I might have given it to a beggar to satisfy a whim immediately

after my arrival, or I might have betted it on the result of a race; or instead, I might have hidden, thinking, in some garret and lived sparingly on dry bread until the orgy of dreaming had exhausted itself. As it happened, I wandered about aimlessly, watching, listening, talking to people, frenzied with happiness because I was beginning an amazing adventure, which I could not really fathom. I was adrift on the face of the earth, walking about on the heart of civilisation, listening to its ponderous throbbing, watching the great veins of violent blood coursing towards the gigantic organs. Just then the heart was straining under a terrific stress. The war was at its climax. Every able-bodied man was in arms. Even old men were playing at soldiers and strutting about on their shaky legs, trying to look fierce. There was madness in the air.

From all the corners of the world young men had gathered for the war, and here, in the heart of London, they were prowling about, on leave from the front or recuperating from their wounds, trying to drown in wild enjoyment the horrors they had recently experienced and the pricking consciousness that life might hold for them only a few more hours. Just then, sober men played like children with old men's vice. And it soothed me to find myself among a host of men whom despair had made as callous as it had made me, laughing, drinking, scoffing at the black ghost that had taken possession of us all.

If I am asked now or ask myself what I did during those forty-eight hours I could only answer that I do not know, could not describe it deliberately in words,

with consecutive incidents and a graph of my movements. It is a vague blur, a cloud without form, drifting on the wind, changing its form with every puff of the panting memory that tries to embrace it. Yet, take it as a whole, it remains in my mind as one of the most vital incidents of my life. Because I changed in its course as deliberately as if some preposterous devil had thrust his hand down my throat, gripped my gizzard and turned me inside out. Until then I had been terrified of life and shocked because God did not exert his omnipotence to punish evil and reward virtue. The lesson of the war, bringing cynicism and despair with it, had remained until then like a poisoning drug rushing through my system, which refused to assimilate it and was trying to expel it, still hoping that the idealistic dreams of youth had truth in them. Now I submitted to the drug's action and came to understand that there was no such thing as good and no such thing as evil. Or at least, that both good and evil had a new meaning. Experience was good and innocence evil.

It would be correct to call my existence for those forty-eight hours a debauch; but there are times when a debauch is as consoling to the weary spirit as its mother's milk is to a hungry child.

On the morning of the third day I arose to find myself penniless. Therefore I had to find work of some sort. I walked out into the street and consulted the first policeman I met, because I had no idea of how one sought employment, never having had any.

'How does one get a job?' I said to the policeman.

He looked at me in amazement, saw the silver badge of the disabled soldier on my coat lapel, and became friendly. We entered into conversation. Hearing that I had served in the Irish Guards he became still more friendly and told me that he himself had served in the Coldstreams. If war had no further use than that of establishing a bond of friendship between those that fight side by side in it, it would still be more attractive to warm-blooded men than the milk-oozing fruits of pacificism.

'What sort of work do you want?' said the policeman.

I told him that I had no fixed ideas on the matter but that I wanted some interesting sort of work, such as being a porter in a hotel, work that would enable me to come in contact with numbers of different human characters. The policeman scoffed at the idea of my being a hotel porter, work which he considered beneath a guardsman's dignity, unless I became a hall porter, a very important post, but one which was difficult to get unless one had money or long experience. On the other hand, he thought that, with my smart appearance and my education, I might get a job as 'gentleman's valet' or commissionaire, either of which posts I would fill with credit to myself and my regiment. In any case I was to apply to the Guards' Employment Bureau. Finally, he offered to lend me half a sovereign. I thanked him for his help and refused the money. Then I pawned my overcoat and went to the bureau, at Birdcage Walk.

I was received very courteously by an ex-sergeant-major, who curiously enough, had lost all the terror

with which a non-commissioned officer of his rank inspires the private soldier. He was, of course, in civilian clothes and I was no longer compelled to stand to attention when speaking to him. I owed him simply the respect that a young man owes to a man who is older than himself. So I could see that he was a kindly fellow and I liked him. He was able at once to procure me a job, as assistant foreman in a brewery. Then he gave me good advice about avoiding slums, bad company, bad women, gambling and drink.

I had no idea what a brewery was like or what I was expected to do, but never having worked for wages, and knowing nothing of the unpleasant side of civilian labour, I was very enthusiastic about it. Indeed, even to this day, I am very enthusiastic about every experience that is new to me, from going to sleep in a strange room to taking a trip into a strange country. And I tire of everything now as quickly as I did then.

I got a room in Pimlico near the brewery and I reported for work the following morning at six o'clock. To prove that I had no idea of attaching any importance to the work, I confess that I do not know what wage I was paid, what were the hours of work, or the duties I had to perform.

I only distinctly remember the foreman, whom I was supposed to supersede when I had learned my duties.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BREWERY

When I saw that foreman I was horrified. He was about thirty-eight years of age and quite sturdily built by nature, a man who should still be young, vigorous, and potent, with sufficient experience of life to lend dignity to his face, without having lost any of youth's beauty. Yet his appearance inspired me with that objectionable pity which is aroused by a foul disease or the decrepitude resulting from debauchery. He was a mild, well-mannered fellow, with a gentle voice, obviously an excellent workman, an excellent servant, reliable, honest. But there was no soul behind his eyes. He could not hold himself erect. His face was horribly drawn, without colour, emaciated. There were deep rings beneath his eyes. His thin hands were a yellowish colour. They were covered, on the back, with sickly veins. He walked as if walking were an uncouth and unpleasant exercise. When he spoke, it seemed that he had long since grown weary of speaking. He could not look one straight in the face, but kept raising and lowering his eyes furtively. He had worked in this brewery nearly all his life and it had reduced him to this, a condition more resembling that of a corpse than of a living man.

It has always struck me as odd that the English who produce the finest types of human beings also produce a vast number who are wretched physically and slavish of disposition. I suppose it is because the fine types need many worms to suck in order to attain their splendour of body and mind. And I doubt if it is the factory system that is responsible for this. Shakespeare, who was the last writer to tell the exact truth about life, without fear of hurting public opinion, always referred to the foreman's type as a wretch, a dog, or a varlet, and yet used these unfortunate individuals as the principal vehicle for the expression of wisdom and human virtue (whatever there is of that quality in the human race).

I asked myself as he led me from the office to show me the works: 'If I stay here and become a foreman in this fellow's place, am I going to become a man like him? Does working for wages produce this effect on everybody, or is he an exception?'

I was given enormous and uncouth clogs and a khaki-coloured smock, somewhat similar to that worn by a grocer's assistant. As I put on the smock I had the feeling of repulsion that a horse must have, when, for the first time, the bit goes between his teeth, or the saddle touches his shivering back. It was a uniform, and it seemed to me then that these people were beckoning me politely into a jail. The brewery itself was like a jail. An ancient building that seemed to have grown around itself, like an old potato, which, forgotten in a warm place, sends out incongruously, before winter has yet gone, multitudes of shoots and sickly stalks.

I was shown, with awe, the great urn where the brewer mixed his potion. Then I was led among the vats, through alleyways and up and down narrow stairways that were slippery with spilt beer and daubs of yeast. A dark, gloomy place, full of an acrid stench that rises in my nostrils as I write. I hear the barrels roll bumping on stone flags and see great pipes belching their brown fluid and workmen swaying as they skim the froth from the brewing cauldrons, drunk with smell. The clanking of chains beyond and the thudding of mallets bunging barrels. A monstrous, dark place, silent in spite of its burly hubbub.

Monstrous but beautiful it was, and the workers like conspirators in a cellar, making drugs to set the slow tongues of village yokels wagging and to fill distant valleys with the hoarse laughter of drunkards staggering to their homes of night. There was a great deal there that pertains to the occult ritual of a mystical religion: the worship of Bacchus. The men standing by their vats with long skimming-poles, wiping the golden perspiration from the swelling hop, moved rhythmically, and their faces bore a cunning leer.

With the foreman I made the rounds of the brewery and was shown everything. I hardly heard a word of what he told me, and understood nothing, for I was not seeing the place in detail but as a whole, trying to consume its significance, so that I might add it to my dreams and brew words with its smell, its vats, its thudding barrels, and its yeast. Then we went to the foreman's office, a tiny room like a watchman's shelter, littered with papers of all sorts.

There I understood the true cause of the horror with which the man inspired me. For he sat down, and when he was on the point of beginning to explain to me his method of dealing with his business (a matter that he was appointed to teach me) he paused, shivered and became silent. He tapped a sheet of paper with a pencil and then bit the end of the pencil. His lower lip quivered. Then he looked at me gloomily.

'You've just come out of the army,' he said.

I nodded and said I had been discharged some months before.

'When do you think the war is going to be over?' he added after a long pause.

'I have no idea,' I said. 'It might go on for years.'

'Good Lord!' he said, with a start. 'Do you think so?'

'It might,' I said. 'There's no reason why it shouldn't.'

'But it's awful,' he said. 'You're a lucky man to have finished with it. My turn is to come yet.'

'Really. Weren't you out?'

'No. That's why you're here. To take my place. I'll be called up as soon as you've learned the business. The firm have been able to keep me so far but now every fit man has got to go, unless he's making munitions or something like that.'

A ghastly fear came into his face and I pitied him. He did not want to go. He was in mortal terror of going, this wretched man with a face that was yellow as the yeast I had seen him taste a few minutes before.

'He hates me,' I thought. ' He thinks I am signing

his death warrant. That's why he hesitates to show me how his office is managed.'

'Excuse me,' I said, 'but I thought you were over the age.'

He looked forty-five at least.

'No,' he said. 'I'm only thirty-seven, and I've been passed A1.'

Why? He would have fallen under the weight of fighting order, not to mention a full pack. He'd finish a three-mile march on his hands and knees and a parade in hospital. And to picture him in the trenches, after four days and nights without sleep, standing the torture of a heavy bombardment and then the consequent attack, with masses of stooping, grey enemies, advancing at a rush towards his terrified eyes; that was impossible.

'Yes,' he said. 'I'm fit.'

Then he told me that he had a wife and four children and that it was a pity he had to go, because the company was building a new brewery, on modern lines, and he was to become foreman at an increased salary. It was near his home too. Pathetically, he told me about his allotment and about his hobby, rearing rabbits. His wife was ailing lately. She was worrying about his having to go to the war.

'I don't see what use it is taking me out of here, where I'm of use, and putting me somewhere else, where I can't be much use, even though I'm fit,' he said.

Then he sighed and instead of showing me how he managed his office, he told me to go and look round the place and get used to it. I went out and strolled

along a huge room where there were a number of idle vats. I was supposed to memorise the capacity of each vat. I kept thinking about the foreman.

I thought how awful it would be, if, by quickly learning the business of being foreman, I sent this man into the army, where he hated going, perhaps sent him to his death. Even his cowardice, which I despised, made him still more pitiable, and then his wife, his four children, his allotment, his pet rabbits, all these pet circumstances of his life that he would have to forgo in order to fulfil a duty that was almost insolent in its futility.

'He has been here,' I thought, 'since boyhood, and he probably loves this place and considers himself an important and even indispensable citizen. Why should I force him out of it?'

On the other hand, if I went, or slacked at my work, I felt that I was being disloyal to the people who found me the job. If I were a failure, that would make it more difficult for other soldiers to find work.

Then I became extremely irritated with the man because he had put me in an awkward position. And I thought:

'Let him go to the war. After all, I'm not responsible. Why should he arouse pity because he is a miserable wretch, with a wife, four children, an allotment and pet rabbits, more than a fine, daring young man without responsibilities? Why should the beautiful and strong be asked to go first to the slaughter? Why should we pity the loss of the weak and the sick more than the strong? Why does it seem natural to send the

strong and beautiful to their death and natural that cowardly wretches like this man should stay behind? Damn him.' And I became furious with every attribute of the fellow's nature, even with those that appeared to be good on the surface. Even his mildness now appeared to be the subtle mask under which the weak and decadent hide their cunning.

Presently he came shambling towards me on his shabby clogs and said in a timid voice:

'Come with me. You're to serve their beer ration to the men.'

'Listen,' I said angrily. 'Don't think I'm going to drive you into the army by coming here, and I'll tell you why.'

'How do you mean?' he said.

'I mean,' I cried furiously, 'that the doctor who passed you fit must have been in the jigs. Why! You're not fit for a labour battalion."

He started, opened his mouth to speak, but remained silent, looking at the middle button of my smock.

'I don't want your silly job,' I continued. 'If I knew why I was brought here I'd have stayed away. On the other hand I don't see what reason you have to look pathetic and think you have been victimised. You've been hiding here for four years while better men were getting killed.'

'I'll report you to the manager,' he said.

I told him to go to the devil. After that, relations were very strained between us. After my outburst, I again began to pity the man and felt myself an utter scoundrel and an interloper, coming into this brewery

which I loathed, in order to take a job which I despised from a man who loved the brewery and thought the job a highly important and honourable one. The result was that I could not memorise the capacity of a single vat, I could not differentiate between one delicate instrument and another, I slouched around the place, hardly taking any interest in what was happening. I tried to establish contact with the workmen and found that they kept me at a distance as a superior person. If I tried to joke with them, they said:

'Yes, sir, that's very funny.'

'This,' I thought after a few days, 'is no use to me. I do not belong here, and I can never hope to gain more than second-hand experience of life. I am like a scientist watching bees. No matter how closely I watch I can only see the bees and write about them from the point of view of a person who may be a clever scientist but is not a bee. A bee of moderate intelligence could tell much more, if it could be persuaded to down honey and take to writing.'

After five days, the manager called me aside and suggested that I should become more interested in my work. Half an hour later, irritated by what the manager had said, I lost my balance going down a slippery stairway, fell and dropped an exceedingly expensive instrument I was carrying. It was smashed to atoms. The manager was properly furious and more or less told me what he thought of me. I replied in terms that showed I had an even worse opinion of him.

The affair saved me from an awkward situation. I could now leave without feeling that I had run away

from a job that had been found for me by kind people. At the same time, I could rid myself of the responsibility of sending the wretched foreman to the front. And I had gained something. I can still see those half-drunken workers skimming the foam from the great cauldrons and I can smell the fermenting liquor.

I did not return to the brewery on Monday morning.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HOTEL

On Monday morning I went to seek another job. Not caring to return to the Guards' Employment Bureau I went to another bureau, a less pretentious one. As far as I can remember there were scores of them at that time. The gentleman in charge appeared to be an old colonel. I forget his name, but he had white moustaches, which were remarkably clean and not stained in any way ; a very odd circumstance, for white moustaches are nearly always discoloured. He had also a bulbous nose and a habit of snorting, either from the effects of catarrh or to lend effect to his manner. His face bore a fixed expression of acute surprise, and when addressed on the most trivial matter, he started as if struck and ejaculated with great force:

'Eh?'

Then subsiding gradually and looking at one in a terrible and ferocious manner, he invariably continued: 'What do you mean? Speak more clearly. I'm not as young as I was.'

I could never understand why that poor old fellow was dragged from his home and induced to govern a bureau of that kind, work which demanded a certain

degree of efficiency and energy. But he was extremely charming and kind.

'I want to get a job as a hotel porter,' I said to him.

After having uttered his ejaculation and coughed several times on to an enormous speckled handkerchief, the old man said:

'What the devil do you mean? You don't mean to tell me you are an hotel porter? How odd! Very extraordinary. A man came in here this morning and told me that he was a rat-catcher but wanted to . . . Come, young man, do you know anything about horses?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well! Then, let's have no nonsense about hotel porters. Dreadful people. Always hovering about when a poor devil is leaving a hotel. Do you object to living in the country?'

'Excuse me, sir, but I wish to become a hotel porter.'

'Eh? But why the devil do you wish to become a hotel porter?'

'Simply because I am likely to meet interesting people coming and going. It appears to me to be a very interesting occupation, because of the multitude that is always passing in and out."

'Utter rot,' said the colonel. 'Young man, you are very disappointing. Everything is disappointing. The whole war is disappointing. Eh? Who said people in hotels were interesting? Just to teach you a lesson, I'll get you a job in a hotel. You'll be sorry for it for the rest of your life. I may tell you that the taking of tips has the most demoralising effect on human character.

I was never so shocked in my life as when I discovered quite recently that men in respectable professions, medicine and the law, are not above taking a tip. Not a considerable sum, mark you, like a sovereign, but even a small sum like half a crown. Eh? So you want to turn Swiss, do you ?"

'I beg your pardon, sir?'

'Eh? What do you mean? Speak more clearly.'

At last I escaped from the colonel and passed into the hands of his second in command, a very efficient young woman, who despatched me almost at once to a private hotel in South Kensington in search of a job. When I arrived there I was met by a very impertinent youth of sixteen or so, dressed in the uniform of a hall porter. He made a slight bow to me at first, and held the door wide open for me to enter, thinking I was a guest, but when I told him the purpose of my visit, his manner changed at once. Nodding very contemptuously over his left shoulder, he told me to take my place in a small queue of people who were waiting for jobs.

'Child,' I said to him angrily. 'None of your damned impudence. I want to see the manageress. Jump to it, or I'll kick you around the square at a gallop.'

Thereupon the youngster dived into the hall and disappeared through folding doors into a corridor. I walked into the hall, stood still for a minute, very angry, trying to calm myself, so that I could decide with reasoned judgment as to whether I should go or stay. As soon as I had set foot in the hotel I quite realised

that working there as a menial was even worse than working in the brewery, where I was at least a foreman. I would be continually subjected to the contumely of being ordered about, which, to my nature, is an unbearable degradation. As I was on the point of going, I again saw the youth, accompanied by an oldish man and followed by a lady, approaching from the corridor.

'There he is,' said the youth to the oldish man, and pointing at me.

'Is that the lad?' said the oldish man truculently, coming forward a little.

'What's this?' said the lady who followed them.

The youth began to describe my conduct and the threats I had uttered, speaking in such a cringing tone that I at once understood the lady to be the manageress. So I came forward, bowed, and handed her the letter given to me by the colonel, saying:

'From Colonel –, madam.'

'Oh!' she said. 'Dear Colonel – !'

She opened the envelope, read the note, looked at me rather severely, and said:

'So you have come for . . . Follow me, please.'

'Get on with your work, you two,' she snorted at the discomfited porters.

As we passed through the hall towards her office, she turned to the hall porter and said:

'Where are the others that were waiting to interview me?'

He looked round. Lo! The others had gone. They had suddenly dashed out for some reason or other.

I followed the manageress into her office. She began to interrogate me on my qualifications for filling the post of night porter in her hotel. The examination was very long indeed. The hours were from nine o'clock at night until eight o'clock in the morning and the pay was one pound a week. To occupy this job an able-bodied man was necessary and men were hard to get in those days; yet that cross old maid treated me as severely as if I were soliciting work as personal secretary to His Majesty. She was a withered woman of forty. She had once been an exceedingly pretty woman in a buxom fashion, but with that hardness of soul which in many pretty women ruins their chances of growing old with dignity. Her meanness, which manifested itself in her mouth, her eyes and her carriage, had probably prevented her from ever falling really in love, from giving herself with that abandon which alone excites a man into real affection; and as a consequence, she was now approaching middle age, dissatisfied with her youth and greedy of passion in an old age which should be the preserve of meditation and contentment. At once, I noticed how greedily she looked at my youthful face, with a mixture of desire and hatred. I noticed her metallic voice, at one moment cruel, at the next seductive, like the purring of a cat. The angry twitching of her lips belied the peace which she affected by speaking as if she were infinitely bored, in a drawl that she considered that of a lady of quality, but which was really the half-bred accent of an *arriviste*. I sat listening and answering her questions, attracted in an extraordinary way by her personality and yet

disliking her intensely, because she was insincere, mean, and without intelligence.

'I must get this job,' I said to myself, 'and see more of her.'

Towards that end I lied profusely, claiming to have served as a boots at the Railway Hotel, Galway, before joining the army. I doubt if she paid much heed to my claim, and engaged me, simply because she liked having an insolent young man in her power. I feel certain she said to herself:

'I'll teach this impertinent young pup how to behave himself.'

She told me that there seemed to be no reason why I should not be able to give her satisfaction in every possible way, except lack of willingness on my part to do my duty by her. I had youth, a rather pleasant appearance, a fair education and, she admitted, a certain dignity of carriage. I appeared, she said, to have average intelligence and to have been reared in surroundings, which, although they might have been better, could also have been worse.

I returned to my lodgings, collected my kit, and came back to the hotel. I was given a room at the top of the house, a very extraordinary room indeed. It had once been a bathroom and was still used as such, and I was under contract to allow part of the staff to take baths there on Saturday afternoons, from four to eight; an astounding arrangement, considering that all the staff was female with the exception of the two day porters. But then, the whole hotel was extraordinary.

It was one of those hotels that are composed of two

or three houses joined together. It was in a fairly fashionable neighbourhood and in peace-time it must have been very quiet and select; but in war-time every preserve of the middle-aged middle classes had been ruthlessly disturbed. There were soldiers everywhere, coming and going to the front. Everybody was in a state of excitement. There were very few young men going about at a loose end, and the demand for them, by women in whom the instinct for love had been accentuated by the terrific slaughter of virile males, was stupendous. You can imagine what disturbance was caused by my arrival among the staff of women and even among the guests, who were nearly all composed of women.

Having taken over my bedroom and dressed in black trousers and in a waistcoat with sleeves and a multitude of buttons, I came downstairs. The little old man was ordered to show me over the building. At first he took me downstairs and showed me a furnace which I had to keep going all night. Then he showed me the rooms of the waitresses, whom I had to call in the morning. Then the room occupied by the cook, whom I should have to rouse strenuously, as she was hard to waken. Then he brought me into the kitchen, where I was to receive my night's rations. There I met the cook.

She was a native of South Africa, probably a half-breed, by a Boer father out of a native woman of colour. She was extremely ugly of countenance, with a bedraggled, flabby mouth, a crooked nose, and stringy black hair. But her eyes shone with a sensual passion

that overcame the horror inspired by her ugliness, by arousing in its stead an extraordinary lust that was still more repulsive. This woman, as soon as she saw me, uttered a low cry like that of a wild animal and dashed at me. Seizing me around the waist with great violence, she attempted to hurl me upon the floor, obviously with the intention of amusing herself with me. But I was stronger than she and, rather startled, pushed her away with some force. Some women that were gathered there burst into shrieks of laughter. The half-breed's eyes became vicious for a moment, and then became sad. Her lower lip dropped and she began to blubber. Then she went to a corner of the room and brought three eggs which she offered me.

'Come on, mamma,' said the little man. 'Give him 'is rations. No foolin' about. I'm in a hurry.'

I got my rations and brought them upstairs to the pantry. There I met some of the waitresses who had just come in for the night. They also seemed very excited and embarrassed me very considerably by their looks. It must be remembered that I was still almost a youth and innocent of women.

Having shown me the whole house and told me all my duties, the little old man went away. At eleven o'clock I began my labours. I had to clean all the drawing-rooms, sitting-rooms, card-rooms, corridors and hallways. Then I had to polish all the shoes. I had also to attend to the furnace, to the door, and to the lift. I had to answer the calls of the guests, to rouse the whole staff in the morning, and bring a cup of tea to the housekeeper when I awakened her.

Being ignorant of work, all this seemed very simple to me. But as soon as I began, I understood that it was very considerable labour indeed. Never having been able to accommodate myself to the performance of senseless drudgery, I surrendered the intention of cleaning the rooms after a feeble effort. Instead, I dodged about from the furnace to the pantry and back to the hall door to let in late arrivals, and when I saw the manageress prowling about, I escaped by means of the lift to the top floor. At last, when she finally retired for the night, at about two o'clock in the morning, I collected all the shoes from the corridors and brought them down in the lift to the hall. There I quickly wiped them with a cloth and carted them up again in the lift. Then I returned to the task of dodging about the house, doing absolutely nothing and yet utterly exhausted by the labour of dodging my work. I became exceedingly angry with myself for having come to the place, with the manageress, with the half-breed cook, with the two insolent porters, and with the waitresses who had made eyes at me. I was particularly scandalised by the fact that I was the only man in the house among the staff, like the pimp in a brothel. At about five o'clock, I was tempted to leave in the morning.

I sat down in the pantry, put my head between my hands, and began to think, desolately, that I was in no manner encountering the romance I had expected. Instead of a magnificent building, with a bearded and ornate hall porter, shuffling enormous limbs across marble floors, breeched lackeys, sedate waiters, million-

aires wealthy above the ordinary, mysterious women, celebrities, I found nothing but mediocrity represented in the hotel on all sides ; and here I was, roaming about all night alone, performing work of the most menial kind, with nothing to break the monotony. Even the brewery had been better than this. I remembered how the old colonel had warned me against becoming Swiss, and how the policeman had told me that the work of a menial porter was beneath the dignity of a Guardsman. I was very much ashamed of myself; the same sort of shame as I imagine would overwhelm me should my father discover that I had funked a fight or stolen money or told a lie. The terrible shame of being a menial; yea, even one governed by a woman.

I made up my mind to go, and then I remembered the manageress. Just as the foreman in the brewery represented the yeasty soul of that den, here the withered prettiness of the manageress represented the soul of an hotel. I got excited at the thought of her. I decided to stay and disturb the cantankerous routine of her life.

I roused the house, had my breakfast, a bath, and went to bed in my bathroom. At four o'clock, I awoke to find a buxom, dark-haired wench leaning over my bed, smiling at me in a most endearing manner.

'What do you want?' I cried in amazement, forgetting where I was.

'I brought you a cup of tea,' said the woman. 'I'm Irish. You're Irish, aren't you? I saw you and knew you were Irish by your voice.'

When an Irishwoman is kind-hearted there is nothing

more wonderful in the world; for kindness in her is added to that fertile courage which can rouse the most laggard coward to manliness and makes a hero of a playboy. As she talked to me in her soft, rich southern voice, I felt my heart throbbing with an extraordinarily soothing love, not for her personally, but through her goodness and virtue, for all that is good and virtuous in humanity. It was the first time, really, that I had felt the influence of human affection since I had left France; or indeed since I had become corrupted by the cynicism, that participation in a modern war imposes on the soul of a raw youth, whose senses are unable to withstand the monstrous roaring of guns. My relatives had been overkind. But this woman's kindness was the germ of something new, which I had not hitherto experienced. It had the element of passion in it.

There was nothing gentle or sentimental about her. As I sipped my tea and smiled happily at her, she sat on the bed and talked furiously.

'What brought you here?' she cried. 'This is a nice place for you to come. Though I'm glad you came, for there's an awful lot of people here. You could easily get a job as a policeman. You're tall enough. Why don't you get a job as a commissionaire? I wouldn't stay here a day if I were you. Though I'd be lonely if you went now that you're here.'

Then, with marvellous shrewdness, she sketched for me the character of each individual in the house, painting each one more darkly than seemed consistent with her kind eyes. She warned me against having

any traffic with the other girls, as they were not as good as they might be.

'They're any man's meat,' she said, 'from a militia private to a gouty old general. They don't care who they go up to, and they're tearin' round town every night on the prowl. Its shockin' awful.'

And immediately taking complete possession of me, she promised to darn my socks, to look after my linen, and take me out to visit her friends, good Irish people, who were teetotallers and religious. She would keep me out of way of all harm. I thanked her and then she hurried away, after suddenly having affected a degree of terror.

'Lord!' she said, as she dashed out the door. 'If I were caught here in your room . . .'

Shortly after she had gone, the house porter came to say that the manageress wanted me in her room. I dressed and went down. She received me in bed, and surrounded by various waitresses, who bustled about in a state of extreme excitement and fear. It was an interesting situation, and one that paid me very well for my days of bondage in that hotel. For the doubtful pleasures of riotous entertainment can always be bought and generally they pass, leaving nothing but a bored or wine-clouded impression; yet the memory of the manageress in bed in her room and attended by her subordinate maids is as clear to-day as the day I saw it and fuller of human knowledge.

Her room was the best one in the hotel. I afterwards learned that the proprietor of these hotels (there were several in one ownership) owed her a debt of gratitude.

It was furnished in very good taste, except that there was that extra touch of voluptuousness which prevents a woman's apartment from ever being really beautiful, at least from the male point of view, which associates a certain degree of strength and asceticism with beauty. She lay on a rich bed, her head and shoulders propped against a quantity of pillows. A very elaborate nightcap covered her head. It was embroidered with lace and had a row of gaily coloured bows around its rims. A nightgown, also richly embroidered, showed at her breast, between the folds of a silk dressing-gown. The swelling base of one breast peeped above the edge of the nightgown, and were it not for her face, her figure, adorned with an extreme cunning, would arouse pleasant fancies in the most temperate mind. But her face was so cruel, so dried of youth's sap, so artificial, so drawn, so full of cunning, so unhappy, such a tattered map of hypocrisy that all her fripperies and all her cute enhancements of her inner charms served but to establish a striking resemblance between her and the beldam of a bawdy-house.

I stood unnoticed by the door for a few minutes watching. It appeared that my mistress was indisposed. One waitress, her favourite, a wench with rosy cheeks and intriguing dark eyes and a pretty figure, the occasional mistress of a staff-officer at Whitehall, stood by the head of the bed, holding a bottle of smelling salts and a small box which contained aspirin tablets. Another was stuffing a hot-water bottle under the bedclothes at the lady's feet. Another waited with a tray on which there was some tea and toast. A fourth was

arranging the pillows under my lady's head. And while they waited on her, she nagged at them most bitterly, moaning and closing her eyes in pain. The wretched woman had such an extraordinary personality that she infected me also with terror as I stood by the door watching this odd spectacle.

At last she said:

'That will do now. You may go. Where is that night porter?'

I came forward. The maids left the room. The manageress remained with closed eyes, trembling slightly and groaning, for nearly a minute. Then she looked at me.

'You also,' she said bitterly.

'Madam,' I said.

'Oh!' she cried dramatically. 'Ingratitude! All my life I have been kind. With tears in your eyes you promised me to do your best, if I only took you off the streets and gave you bread.'

'I beg your pardon,' I began angrily, and then became silent.

She was so interesting that I could not become indignant.

'Yes,' she continued, after she had shuddered several times at the sound of my voice. 'And to think that my loved one has fallen out there while wretches like you have escaped! Oh! I'll die of this. This is the last blow in a lifetime of torture. Dear Lord! You have asked me to bear too heavy a cross.'

Again she closed her eyes, moaned and shuddered. Then she opened her eyes, looked at me fiercely and cried:

'You impertinent, ungrateful and insolent boy, do you know that I heard this morning that my fiancé has been killed in action?'

'I am very sorry.'

Astounding! She showed me a telegram, which said that Major . . . of the 7th . . . had been killed in action. The telegram certainly did not say that the Major was the fiancé of Mrs. Pemberton, but it might be so. And yet I could not feel pity for her; rather was her situation as ludicrous in my eyes as that of Doll Tearsheet in the hands of the bailiffs.

'I am exceedingly sorry, madam,' I repeated, handing back the telegram.

'You have shown it,' she cried, 'by neglecting your work last night. Everybody complained of you. You have done nothing. Colonel Morgan threw his top boots into the corridor and threatened to leave the house unless they were properly polished. All the rooms were dirty. The boiler was almost cold. You *loafed* all night.'

'Very well,' I said. 'Find somebody else in my place. I'm going. I'm sorry I . . .'

'How dare you say such a thing?' she gasped. 'Lucy! Lucy! My smelling salts. Quickly!'

The dark-eyed waitress dashed in and reached the manageress in time to save her from an apparent swoon. I stood by sheepishly, wondering what to do with myself. Never in all my life have I learned the correct thing to do when a woman feigns hysterics. I am always foolishly outwitted. In a minute or so, the whole horde of waitresses and maids were about the bed, and

even the decrepit old house porter came in and they all glared at me fiercely, thinking they would gain something of the manageress's favour by showing open hostility towards me. I finally sneaked out of the room and left the hotel.

When I reported for duty that evening, the manageress sent for me and told me very severely that she was going to take me in hand. She did in fact follow me around practically the whole night and supervised my labours; but I gave her a devil of a time, by pretending to be even less capable than I was of doing my job. Utterly exhausted, she crept into bed about five o'clock in the morning. Next afternoon my Irish waitress again brought me tea, and this time I was not so enthusiastic about her, because she appeared to be too possessive. Putting her arms around my neck, she dropped her head on my bosom and burst into tears.

'My poor boy,' she cried. 'You'll have to leave here at once. No. Not at once. I'll tell you when to go. I have a plan. I'm offered a job as lady's maid in a family that's going to the south of France and I think you might get a job as a valet. Then we could be together.'

As I saw no reason why we should be together, I felt very embarrassed by this proposal. Being so close to the woman, I found that she was of very coarse fibre, and not at all attractive, and she repelled me. In any case, the idea of being anybody's valet was beyond my endurance. So I told her I had a headache, and that I was going out for a walk.

I took a train and went into town. In a bar I met a man who had just got discharged from King Edward's Horse. He was an accountant and lived in Antofogasta. We drank quite a considerable quantity of beer, and he became so enthusiastic about the delights of life in Antofogasta that I decided to leave England at once and journey thither. The result was that I arrived at the hotel an hour late and extremely cheerful.

There was quite a tumult when I arrived. Colonel Morgan had not found his top boots as polished as he thought they should be, and was at that moment complaining to the manageress. The house porter leered at me, and said that I was to report to the manageress at once. I approached her while Colonel Morgan was speaking to her.

'Here is the night porter,' said she.

'Are you the night porter?' said the colonel.

'Yes,' I replied. 'I'm the night porter.'

'Say sir, and stand to attention,' cried the colonel.

'Go to the devil, you red-faced ape,' said I.

'What?' he yelled.

'Yes,' I yelled. 'Clean your own damned boots, and what's more, I'll thrash you if you give me any more of your lip. Who do you think you are?'

The colonel struck at me, missed, and struck the house porter, who was standing at my elbow. Then he lashed out again and hit his knuckles on the wall. Then he subsided, grunted, swore, and ran to the lift, waving his arms, and saying he had been mortally insulted, and that he was going to leave the hotel at once.

'Pack your bag and go,' said the manageress bitterly.

'With pleasure,' said I. 'Be so kind as to give me my wages.'

'You may call for them next week,' said she.

'Not at all,' I said. 'I'm going to stay here until I get paid.'

'You are?' she said.

'Yes,' I said, 'I most certainly am.'

'You refuse to leave the hotel,' she said coldly.

'I do,' I said. 'I refuse to leave here until I get my wages.'

'You are threatening me.'

'Not at all. I merely want my wages.'

'John,' she said. 'Fetch a policeman.'

'Splendid,' I said. 'That suits me very well.'

A crowd had gathered. Visitors were running down the stairs and out of the drawing-rooms, asking what was the matter. Down the corridor, maids and waitresses gathered. The house porter dashed out into the street, and began to call for a policeman. The manageress, feeling that the scene did not add to the prestige of her hotel, drew me aside and suggested that I should go quietly and call in the morning for my money.

'Its too late now,' I said. 'I'd like to explain matters to the police officer. You can't treat an ex-soldier in this manner.'

At that, the manageress leaned against the wall, closed her eyes, and pretended to go into a faint. But for some reason or other, the spectators were not of her party, and nobody took any notice of her. So she had to recover after a few moments. The policeman

arrived, and came forward with his notebook ready to hand.

A long conversation began. I kept silent while the manageress was speaking. She made a rather violent charge against me, saying that I threatened to kill her and the house porter, that I had insulted all the guests, struck Colonel Morgan, and refused to leave the hotel. She urged the officer to put me under arrest, as I was a menace to the public in my present condition.

'As a matter of fact,' she concluded, 'he's an *Irishman*.'

'What have you got to say to this?' said the policeman.

I explained everything to him as exactly as I could. While I was speaking, he looked at my coat lapel, saw my disablement badge, and said:

You've been to the front?'

'Yes.'

'What lot?'

I told him.

'Same brigade,' he said, and winked at me.

Then he coughed and turned to the manageress.

'I don't think you can turn a discharged soldier out into the street without a penny,' he said. 'It's no concern of mine really, but I don't think you'd come well out of it, if the man made a complaint about it, or did anything desperate through hunger.'

'What do you mean?' she said. 'Are you not going to arrest him?'

'Shame,' said a lady on the stairs. 'You can't treat an ex-serviceman in this brutal manner. Let me give you your wages.'

Until that moment I had been enjoying the scene,

but as soon as I became an object of pity, I suddenly realised that I was in a very humiliating position. Seeing the lady approach, I said to the manageress:

'All right. I'm going. I don't want your money. Keep it.'

Somebody had packed my things and brought my bag into the hall. I seized it and made for the door. The policeman caught me by the arm.

'Hold on,' he said. 'Don't be a fool. What's the matter with you? You wanted your wages, and now when you are getting them, you won't take them.'

'Yes,' said the manageress. 'To save trouble, he can have his wages.'

I followed her into the office. She counted out my money, and I signed a receipt for it. It amounted only to a few shillings. Then she began to give me a lecture, but I cut her short and left the room. In the hall I was presented with a sum of money which the visitors had collected for me. I refused to take it, but my friend the policeman took it himself. Then he took me by the nape of the neck, pushed me out of the door, and stuffed the money into my pocket.

As we turned to the left down the street, I was hailed from the basement.

'Hold on,' said the policeman. 'Somebody wants you down there.'

I turned and looked. It was my Irish friend. She was leaning out of the window and in tears, and she was knotting something into a handkerchief. Behind her was the mulatto cook, grinning and blowing kisses from her puckered lips. The Irish waitress threw the

handkerchief on to the pavement. The little bundle jingled. I bowed to her, kissed the handkerchief, and put it into my pocket.

'Write to me,' she called after me as I walked away.

'You are well rid of that lot,' said the policeman. 'Take my tip for it, hotel work is no good. Take a job as a commissionaire or a gentleman's valet.'

I never felt so ashamed of myself in my life.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMBANKMENT

I LEFT my bag in the luggage depository of the Underground Railway at Victoria. Then I set out into the streets and wandered aimlessly. It was a little after eleven, just when the streets are most crowded. And crowded city streets always have an extraordinary effect on my mind. When I am bored, when my imagination has lain fallow for days or for weeks, when nothing has happened recently to disturb me and bring to life that stomach-urge-to-create, when despairing unbelief pictures the universe as a foolish galaxy of toy balloons strung by an idiot in space, then crowds moving to and fro between street walls arouse dark laughter in me. Their movements appear senseless. They have none of the beauty or dignity of naked animals, but are covered with foul rags and are herded together in a stinking place. But when I am under the influence of any of the great and beautiful emotions, sorrow, joy, love, hatred, or creative passion, then I move through crowded streets like a glutton at a feast, and revel in the presence and in the contact of countless images of myself. Then I see beauty in every face, and every moving body is wild with teeming images of

adventurous drama and the clashing sounds of traffic are the hurly-burly of a giant tournament, where man, through his great genius, surmounts the limits of his earthly sphere, by filling the universe with his boundless energy. Then I suck strength from every alien muscle and sinew as I pass and my imagination reaches godly heights, loaded to bursting point from the store of tales and fancies that each face offers to my eyes.

That night, my feelings were of a different kind, being governed neither by gross contempt nor by vaulting pride. I felt humiliated and so ashamed that I wanted to hide from my fellow-men, lest the evil might offend me or the good pity me. Then I was convinced that I was a useless atom of society, an individual condemned by some gross fault in his making to a life of torture. The tumult of life seemed beyond my capacity to endure, even in its simplest manifestation. And my mind, fanning my fears, ranged across the whole expanse of human activity, showing how brutal is the human treatment meted to the weak, from the slaughter of the aged by savage nomads, to the clubbing of wastrels by police in civilised societies.

Then I must hide, I thought, from the lusty and the dominant and seek beings of my kind, those who are outcast, without hope, ambition, property or self-respect, those whose God is a crucified Jew, and whose heavenly throne is a dog's perch by a rich man's table.

So I went to the Thames Embankment. There is something in a river that appeals to a mind in woe. Just as the green backs of sunlit fields, still moist with the dewy kisses of the dawn, are the fit playgrounds

of happy youth, with its dancing eyes and its rippling laughter, so gloomy rivers gather in their endless flight the tears of the sorrowful. They are symbols of eternity, for neither day nor night can stay their passage. They grow lean in summer, starved by the sun's majesty, which dries the tears of heaven. In winter, they swell and bluster, for that black season is their festival, and from the drowned earth continuous streams flow down their muddy banks into their writhing bellies. They are eternal except for some great catastrophe. But then nothing is eternal. Even gods have died.

I leaned over the river wall, and looked down and then walked along, looking away from the water, afraid that if I looked too much I could not resist the hypnotism of that dark mass of twisting water which was so silent. I came to a seat. I saw a woman sitting there, huddled in her coat, which she wore loose around her shoulders. I sat beside her. I watched her. She looked a hag, ragged, and with each breath she made a rumbling noise, as if her membranes were stifled by drunkenness or some foul disease. I trembled, listening to her, and wanted to move away and yet remained seated next to her, attracted by this horrid picture of what I feared I might become myself, dragged down by this mood into the underworld. Here was a being such as I sought, one whose companionship would solace me, yet I felt nothing for her but repugnance. I even hated her foulness. I did not pity her weakness, but wanted myself to become a clubman, to bash out her feeble brains, and throw her carcass in the river.

As I sat thinking, she raised her head, and looked

at me, and I saw an awful face, pocked with disease. Then she hoarsely offered me her love. Half mad, I began to laugh in a shrill voice. Then I got up and walked on, laughing, while she swore at me. When I had gone a few yards I stopped laughing, halted, turned back, and gave her five shillings, the amount I had received in wages at the hotel. She took the coins in a trembling hand, peered at me suspiciously, bit the coins, and then she rose and shuffled away, mumbling to herself. I stood watching her in astonishment. She glanced over her shoulder once and spat. Then again I began to laugh shrilly, and went on my way along the river bank.

I passed several men and women either sitting on benches or wandering by the wall, and I felt the same repulsion for them all: the same feeling that they were ugly, useless, beastly, that they should be clubbed and cast into the river, as offal. Not a single body seemed possessed of the least vestige of human dignity. How could I cling to them for comfort? They had nothing. Misery had soured them all of gentle feeling. They were dead to all but the gross emotions, hunger and thirst, and perverse lusts. The river ceased to fascinate me. Just as when a man dives on a hot day into a deep pool, plunging to the depths so as to cool the surfeit of his body's heat, and reaching the bottom feels that his contained breath is stifling his lungs, he claws his way wildly to the surface, and shouts with joy when his eyes again gaze upon the sun, and he feels its warm light upon his body, so now I wanted to fly from the company of these damned people. I no longer felt

downcast or tempted to surrender in the battle of life, seeing the punishment that would befall me.

'I shall go and get myself a room,' I thought, 'and to-morrow I shall look for another job.'

I came to a coffee stall as I turned from the river. It was drawn up in an open space, and had a little crowd of customers about its counter. I came up and bought some coffee and pie. . . . Beside me I noticed an Australian soldier, leaning against the corner of the booth, his uniform very shabby and dishevelled, continually glancing hither and thither. A deserter? He had the dried, lean, brown face of a man who lives in the open under a hot sun, a fine, lanky fellow, a typical Australian. He had a splendid stretch of limb and his features were good. His jaw was firm. There was width between his eyes. One hand, which he had on his hip, with widespread fingers, was powerful and the fingers looked dangerous, poised for a grip. His whole being spoke of courage, strength, and resolution. Yet his uniform was shabby and dishevelled, and it was obvious from the way his furtive eyes glanced hither and thither that he was a deserter. I sipped my coffee. The owner of the stall was discussing the war with two oldish men, and a merchant seaman. The latter, stuffing pie into his mouth, was talking about submarines.

'Yea. Been torpedoed last time out. Five times I been torpedoed. Strikes me, mates, we get the worst of this blasted war.'

The Australian spat and swore under his breath.

'Have some coffee, mate,' I said to him.

He opened his eyes fully to look at me, a searching glance, but a manly one. Then he nodded his head. I told him to order what he wanted. He might be hungry. If he were a deserter he might be hungry. He began to wolf his food as soon as he got it, but he took it apart and turned his back on the others, leaning against the corner of the stall, jauntily, with his powerful body loose, yet watchful. Now and again the proprietor of the stall looked up at the Australian with a vacant glance. The seaman went on talking.

'Listen, boss,' he said to the proprietor, 'you fellahs here have no idea of what them submarines are like.'

'No, we ain't,' said the bored proprietor. 'I had only two years an' a half of it. I went out in August.'

'I see,' said the sailor.

He became silent for a while. A tiny cripple came up and stood in the shelter of the counter, looking around him with the pained and bitter expression of the cripple. One of the oldish men asked the sailor whether he had ever been captured by a submarine. The Australian asked me casually for a cigarette and just nodded when I bought him a packet. He cracked a match with his thumb nail. Again the sailor began to talk of the horrors he had suffered. Suddenly the cripple burst out in a shrill and angry voice:

'What are you grousin' about, you? Lumme, you should be ashamed o' yerself. You got two legs an' two arms an' a good stomach. You ain't got nothin' the matter with yer. Supposin' you get drowned by a torpedo? What odds? You die a hero. Yer missus'll get a pension or somethin'. You can travel around

and get a job. Look at me. Supposin' ye were like me. Eh?'

All looked at the cripple. Even the bored proprietor raised his eyes from his newspaper and looked at him in a bored fashion. The Australian glanced at him and then spat again. He appeared to regard all of us as alien beings, only remotely connected with him, inhabitants of dark northern lands where the sun never shone, short-limbed degenerates of feeble muscle. Disgust was in his glance, and thinking, I began to understand why such a clean-bodied, strong man could be a deserter. He had grown homesick for the sun and the wide uninhabited stretches of his island continent.

'Oh! Shut up,' said the sailor to the cripple. 'What's the matter wi' you? Toothache? Want a coffee?'

'Blimey,' said the cripple. 'I wish I had a healthy body. I wouldn't mind going to the trenches or into the navy. I wouldn't mind being blown up by a submarine. Just to be fit an' strong for one week. I'd give my life for that. I get fed up hearin' you blokes talkin' about the hardships of war. What do you know about real hardship? Nobody has ever in all my rotten life . . . I walked from Hoxton to-day. I went out there lookin' for a pair o' trousers was promised me. Yes. Let them send me to the bloody front. I'll thank the bloody German that shoots me. I will, straight.'

The proprietor looked up and spoke in his sombre voice.

'Listen,' he said. 'If you had your health and you were in the trenches, you'd wish you were a cripple and be home. I heard men wish it.'

Wearily, he bowed his head again and read. Or at least he appeared to read, for he never turned a page.

'I don't care what you say,' said the cripple, grasping the cup of coffee that the sailor handed him. 'I wish I were dead.'

'There's the river,' said one of the old men, with a laugh.

'God will curse you,' said the cripple, 'for sneerin' at me.'

'Blimey,' said the old man in embarrassment. 'I meant nuthin'. Don't be so bleedin' touchy.'

'Never mind,' said the cripple. 'There is no God.'

'Say, you,' said the sailor. 'None o' that.'

The Australian had been watching me for a few minutes. Suddenly he leaned over and asked me in a low drawling voice what regiment I had served with. I told him. We began to talk. We gradually drew away from the stall.

'Listen,' he said to me. 'You seem to be a good bloke. I've overstayed my leave, and I'm bust to the wide. How are you fixed?'

I gave him a pound of the money they had collected for me at the hotel. He just nodded and stuffed it into his pocket.

'How long are you overdue?' I asked.

'Three weeks.'

'You're posted as a deserter by now.'

'Sure thing.'

'What'll happen to you?'

'Hanged if I know. I don't care. Might get a ship.'

'But how do you manage?'

'Oh! I sleep in the parks during the day. At night I hang around here. He's a good bloke.' He nodded to the stall proprietor. 'I got mixed up with a Jane, and was two days overdue before I knew where I was. Then I got pinched and got into a row with the military police. I got away. I beat up a bloke pretty badly. I've got an idea I'd get a long stretch if they caught me. In any case I'm fed up with the war.'

'How do you pan out for grub and money?'

'Oh! I just hang around. Some of our blokes on leave give me an occasional quid. It's pretty lousy.'

'It must be,' I said. 'Do you know anywhere around where I could get a room.'

He shrugged his shoulders, thought, and then said in his low drawl:

'Best thing to do at this hour o' night is to turn in with a Jane, if you got the dough. I'll be moving along.'

He nodded his head and walked away, with his wide-brimmed hat well down one side of his head, broad-shouldered, jaunty in his carriage. I was astounded by him. The cripple was still cursing his fate, and the sailor talking about submarines, and the proprietor, bored, listless, gloomily stared at his paper. The Australian passed out of sight, and then I also moved off hurriedly. And I thought furiously.

All those at the coffee stall except the Australian were the same as myself fundamentally, with the same conceptions of right and wrong, of honour and dishonour, the same superstitious fears, the same cowardly adherence to the principles that are born of our crowded society and our gloomy climate. Each of us groaned

at his fate, and yet was bound to it. The Australian alone, although the only palpably dishonourable man there, was the only man of courage, because his dishonourable act meant nothing to him. He was of different stuff, born under a different sun, with a consciousness of vast and uninhabited spaces, an individual whose personality was but slightly bound with the personalities of others. The accidents of his life were his laws, and he accepted the chances of fate with calm.

Where did he get this calm, these sinews, this jaunty air, this courage that was proof against the superstition of dishonour? Was it in his climate or in the fact that swarms of human beings did not impinge on his growth?

I saw this man coming thousands of miles from wild backwoods to Europe and the war, and looking contemptuously through half-closed eyes at puny men crawling about in sunless places, cripples, slaves and degenerates, and becoming so proud of his strength and health that these two qualities made him almost a god among his kind.

Then away to swallow lungfuls of wild air untainted by human breath and there to recover the balance that the war had overturned. I swore that I would go at once. Where? Anywhere. Away from Europe, somewhere that had never been desecrated by crucifixes and churches and schools and shops and all the shoddy armament of civilisation, which produced nothing better than cripples screaming at their fate, wishing they were whole in order that they might join the whole

men who were crippled in thousands on the battle-fields.

I wandered for a considerable distance in this mood. Then, that also passed, and I saw the Australian in his true light and disapproved of him. I heard somebody liken Australia to a dump of empty salmon tins. There was no freedom there any more than here. In fact, there was more freedom here, because there was more culture. With the approach of dawn, adventure lost its interest and my tired feet craved rest, and my mind wanted security at all costs.

I reached another coffee bar. The men here were of a different sort, and they were all more or less drunk. One of them proved to be an Irishman. We found that we had been to the same school. He asked me what I was doing. I told him. He burst out laughing.

'That's very funny,' he said, gripping me by the chest and swaying back and forth. 'You come along with me. We've been on a binge. You come along to my digs. Hey! Taxi!'

He suddenly dashed from me out into the street, waving his hat and stick at a taxi that was coming along. When he reached the taxi he waved to me. I followed him.

'I have only one lung,' he said when the cab set off. 'God only knows how long I'll last. At Loos I got it. But, my boy, as long as I last, take it from me, there's going to be some fun.'

He was seized by a fit of coughing. His face was almost yellow in the dawnlight, and his great blue eyes were red around the rims.

'I'll never play rugger again,' he muttered. 'You know, that's a bit tough. See Poulton got knocked out?'

I looked at him with curiosity for the first time. Rugger? Oh! Yes! He was good at football.

Oh! . . . Yes! He worries about the loss of his lung, and he's drinking himself to death because he cannot play football. What an astonishing thing is the human brain! Or is it the damned war that has corrupted every brain to such an extent that the least excuse is sufficient to self-destruction. I, because I have ceased to believe in the efficacy of Christian morality, this man because he has only one lung, the Australian because he is too proud to suffer imprisonment, the cripple because he is a cripple. What must one do, then, to regain one's balance?

Since I lack the courage to kill myself, there is no hope of escape by mingling with the refuse in the gutters of society. I must seek some other way out, by mingling with little fish like myself in the shallow waters.

'I'll get you a job,' said my friend with an air of bravado when I asked him. 'In any case you can billet yourself on me. I've got a flat.'

We arrived at a sumptuous flat near Hyde Park. My friend, Mr. C – , very gaily procured some whisky and soda. We sat down and chatted. He noticed me looking a little curiously at the furniture, which was of an odd pattern, Eastern and very exotic. There was also an odd smell in the room. Some strange perfume.

'Funny place, isn't it,' he said casually. 'It's not

mine. My boy, I may as well tell you at the start that I am a kept man.'

'Really,' I said, showing no surprise because I experienced none.

I never could see any difference between a man being a pimp and being pope. I dislike both pimps and popes, but that is beside the question. Perhaps I lack a moral sense, but I feel no fundamental repugnance against murderers, thieves, and scoundrels of all sorts, simply because they are beyond the law.

'Yes,' said Mr. C–, 'I daresay I am a rotter, and four years ago I would have died of shame if anybody told me I'd be in a position of this sort. But there you are. I'm a kept man. I was very hard up when I had spent my money, and I'm too restless to work. So I met a wealthy woman, a bit old, but very charming. There you are. Have another drink. It can't last long. My last lung is sure to crock up in a few months. Did you ever see the Ryans play for Ireland?'

There was a full flood of traffic in the streets when we went to bed. I awoke about one o'clock. My friend was at the piano in his dressing-gown. He was already half drunk.

'Get dressed,' he said, 'and come out. My lady friend is coming back from Brighton to-day. If you care to meet another lonely woman, she probably knows of one.'

'I don't think I like the idea,' I said. 'I'd rather get a job.'

'Every man to his own taste,' said he, 'as the pig said when he rolled into the ditch.'

He seemed to have an endless supply of money and knew a great number of people, nearly all young men more or less of his own type, adventurers who had been cast out, injured, from the war, and were wandering about London ready for any mischief. Very charming fellows, but all suffering from some peculiar physical deficiency, either a lung, or an arm, or a piece of skull bone, or some ribs. One of them, more sober than the rest, told me I should try clerical work, and go to such-and-such a bureau. I did so, and procured a job as a clerk with an engineering firm in the Piccadilly district. I was to report for duty the following morning. When I told Mr. C – that I had got a job, he shrugged his shoulders and said:

'I think you're a fool. Why should we work? We've done enough work. There's no sense in working. One day's war can destroy all the work done by the whole population in a year. In any case we should all sit down and make the civilian population support us for the rest of our lives. But every man to his own taste, as the pig said . . . . Let's make a night of it. Come and have dinner. I'll bring another old lady along.'

CHAPTER FIVE

THE OFFICE

Here I was confronted with something quite different. In modern industry the clerk is supposedly on a higher social level than the navvy or the bricklayer or the bus conductor, but in reality he has the most menial position of all. In order to please he must suffer a complete denial of his will to self-expression. He must never show signs of anger, of enthusiasm or of any form of human temperament. He is a cipher, whose duty it is to be polite and to play with formulas of words and figures, to bow, to say sir, to be clean, to speak correctly, to efface his humanity. On a meagre salary he must try to live like a gentleman. The result is that he must starve himself in order to keep his trousers pressed.

My experience as a clerk was more fortunate than that of the ordinary individual who is condemned to that miserable mode of life. The war was still on, and it was hard to get the breed of clerks. Even those men who had been clerks and had escaped from the war were not anxious to go back to their office stools. They had smelt the air and the pleasures of foul language, and they wanted something different, they

wanted to go on breathing, moving about in the sun and swearing. For that reason, during the fortnight I remained in the office, no great attempt was made to mould me to the requirements of the correct pattern of clerk, lest I might arise and fly the place, or pull the manager's nose, or throw an ink bottle at the principal director.

My job was to file letters. There had been no filing clerk for some time before my arrival, so that the files were in a state of great disorder. I struggled for five days to set things right, but as I am not good at keeping things tidy, things were as bad, or almost as bad, as they had been when I came. Further, nearly every one in the office amused himself or herself by coming to assist me. As they were all very charming people, they talked and joked with me instead of helping with the work. So that my room downstairs became a sort of gossip shop. When an important letter was wanted there was a tremendous uproar and they all attacked the files, pulling them out one after the other, scattering letters all over the place, and putting them back again in a disorderly mass. At length, I became more terrified of these letters than if they were dangerous living enemies. The whole business seemed to be in a state of astounding disorder. But as the firm's whole undertaking was on war service, I don't suppose their inefficiency injured their profits. All the directors appeared to be very merry, to drink a lot, to spend a lot of time over their meals, and they all had jovial, Falstaffian faces.

One man in particular regarded the filing business as

a sort of puzzle which it was a pastime to unravel. He would come in and sit down on my stool and say to me:

'Now, this is a damned curious thing, if you like. There is no fixed principle for filing letters. It's a matter of memory, my boy, but I feel certain there is some fool-proof method if it could only be discovered.'

In pursuance of this conviction, he spent hours messing about with the letters, while I smoked cigarette after cigarette watching him.

My main occupation, in fact, was reading newspapers and talking to a very charming Scotchwoman, who occupied a position of importance in the neighbouring room. She was a seasoned clerk. She knew her business very well, and if a really important letter were being sought she came and found it. She was a woman of about thirty or so, and she had travelled a great deal, spoke several languages, and had intelligent views about many things, literature, politics, history. She had been for some time at the front with the Red Cross, but had to retire owing to ill health, yet she spoke favourably of the Germans, saying in their favour that they were a clean race. Yet she had all the narrow-mindedness of the clerk, and of all that social group which centres around clerkdom. Order, obedience, bodily cleanliness, and mass consciousness were her ideals of civilisation and culture. She was terrified of an idea that was not generally held by reputable people. Individual characteristics were dangerous in her eyes, and the greatest defect in anybody's nature was that he or she was odd or different from the mass. What was

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CARROLL COLLE

ordained by law was inevitably right until some unknown power changed the law. She had no idea what that power was. She did, for instance, consider that Ramsay MacDonald was a traitor and a scoundrel. I feel certain that, at the present day, if she be still alive, she considers Ramsay MacDonald a national hero; or at least a worthy person. On examination, her only mental virtue was that she was fairly well informed. She had no originality of thought. Her brain was like a gramophone which plays various and extremely different tunes, according as the governor of the instrument winds the spring and places a record on the revolving platform.

It appears to me that her whole class is like her. In this manner civilisation is impossible except in recurring cycles; for it murders individual thought. As soon as individual thought becomes extinct in any society that society perishes, because individual thought is necessary for progress, and things which stand still rot and are overwhelmed. When a society becomes perfectly civilised it inevitably falls a prey to a more primitive society.

I began to argue with this woman one day. I said to her:

'Don't you ever feel that you want to do something different, to stay in bed instead of coming to the office, to blow up the office, to poison the managing director, to rob the cashier, or even to arrive in the morning dressed in a suit of black silk pyjamas?'

She almost fainted with horror. And then she said:

'You Irish people have an amazing sense of humour.'

'No,' I said. 'I'm quite serious. I think it is a great deal more criminal to murder your intelligence by refusing to allow your will and imagination to function than it is to rob a cashier or poison a director.'

'How can you?' she said.

'Yes,' I answered. 'This sort of life seems to me to be absolutely stupid. You have just told me how horrified you were to find only one toothbrush in the kitchen of a Scotch crofter's family and to find that the whole family cleaned its teeth with that toothbrush. But I know people who never cleaned their teeth or took a bath and were yet more interesting and fundamentally moral than the cleanest city clerk, who cleans his teeth after each meal and takes a bath twice a day. I loathe uniformity, and I loathe people who are satisfied with their lot in life. All good comes from unrest and dissatisfaction. It is better to have one toothbrush among six than one idea among a thousand people.'

'You must be a Bolshevik,' she said with horror.

'On the contrary,' I said, 'I am preaching in this instance the exact opposite of Bolshevism, which merely tries to do for the working class what capitalism has done for the bourgeoisie. The working class remains uncivilised and dirty and individually rebellious under capitalism, which has deprived the bourgeoisie of its individual mental freedom. Under Bolshevism everybody would be civilised, everybody a cog in a machine, with his or her own toothbrush, bath-tub, telephone, and with precisely the same code of morality, the same attitude towards abstract thought, God,

society, and every damn' thing conceivable. Which, of course, thank goodness, is impossible.'

'What utter rot!' she said.

I grew excited and burst forth:

'You cannot deny that the working people are more interesting than the upper classes in their manners, habits, and morals. And it is not through any virtue peculiar to physical labour or poverty but simply because working people are not civilised. If I want to find human companionship, gaiety, humour, I go to where the workers amuse themselves in taverns, dance hall, and at games. There I hear laughter, song, jokes such as might be heard in Elizabethan times, when everybody was uncivilised. In places where people are civilised, the gaiety is entirely artificial, the conversation is boring, consisting of banalities and feeble expletives, "oh," "ah," "indeed," "how odd," and "how extraordinary." The only thing that is lacking in working class life is comfort, which is the only benefit civilisation confers on humanity. Otherwise civilisation is a failure and a hoax.'

'You are utterly preposterous,' she said. 'But then you Irish are all preposterous. You are so illogical.'

'Indeed!' I said. 'The truth is that you envy us because we are all uncivilised. We are all where your working class is to-day, and where the whole English race was in Elizabeth's time. We are all violent, disorderly, inefficient, intemperate, and full of the poetry of life. We cannot yet persuade ourselves that we must sacrifice our imagination, and our passions, and our health, to the needs of industry, which is really

unnecessary, since the world could be just as happy and merry a place to live in without cotton goods, tinned food, patent medicine, and shoddy stuff of all sorts, in the making of which England's population has been corrupted, and the beauty of its countryside ruined. An Irish beggar dreaming in a ditch is more sensible of true values than the best-paid manager of a factory, who has to live in a stinking place like Birmingham, and think according to a pattern. I personally would prefer to ape the morals and manners of Shakespeare than those of the modern public school boy, in spite of the fact that Shakespeare deserted his wife, and knew more about pot-houses and the virtues of sack than a decent middle-class man should know. I tell you that all this humbug about civilisation and cleanliness and contentment is rot preached by stupid mediocrities in order to justify themselves.'

Thereupon she ordered me out of her room. But next day she came into my room and said:

'I was thinking last night of what you said about the working class, and how superior they were to the middle classes.'

'I did not say they were superior,' I answered. 'I merely said they were less dull, both as a spectacle and in their lives.'

'Then why not live among them?' she said. 'Why not work as a navvy?'

'That's a good idea,' I said.

'No, you wouldn't,' she said. 'You're too lazy. You Bolsheviks are all the same. You are too lazy to work.'

'A Bolshevik!' I said. 'Do you think I am a Bolshevik? That never occurred to me.'

'Huh!' she said, and stalked out of the room, with the air of having put me in my place.

I think it was my conversation with this woman that definitely aroused my interest in Bolshevism. I had, of course, been acquainted with the theory of Socialism. I had read at college some of the works of Marx, Engels, Ferdinand Lassalle, Bebel, Connolly, Proudhon, Bentham, and various other writers; but while they had appealed to my intellect they had not materially affected my attitude towards life. They merely affected what is most vital in the intellectual consciousness of an Irishman, and that is his attitude towards the negative or spiritual part of life; whereas these writers were mainly concerned with the positive or material side of life. They forced me to the conclusion that God, as my mother understood him, was definitely dead, but, as yet, as far as I was concerned, there was a quarrel about the succession, and I could not make up my mind which Pretender to support. I felt like a shy scholar, who, disturbed at his meditations by the outbreak of a civil war, goes into the streets among the bursting shells, and the whistling bullets, and hears the shouts of the rival parties and reads their proclamations, and feels exalted, and realises that some new force has come into existence, but finds this force existing equally in both factions. The Irish Rebellion of 1916, even though it was led by Connolly, one of the most profound of socialist thinkers, did not make any impression on me, because the issue there had been

confused by the local racial antagonism between the English and the Irish. The new God had gone to battle wearing the armour and the heraldic devices of the old God. On the other hand, the Russian Revolution of 1917 had made a profound impression on me. I was at the front when it broke out, and I first heard of it from an old French soldier on furlough, who said: 'Le Russe ne marche plus.'

I was exalted by the knowledge that a whole nation had suddenly decided to go home from the trenches, away from the ridiculous debauchery, which all the other nations were still taking seriously. But why had they gone home? Their reason for going still seemed to be merely war-weariness. Simply, I suppose, because the latter was the only impulse I could then understand. The Revolution of October 1917 made no impression on me. By that time I had become completely cynical, and had ceased to believe that there was any sensible scheme or purpose in human activity. But man cannot exist without a God of some sort. Despair, cynicism, and atheism inevitably lead to suicide, either of the body or of the mind. A man must have a definite purpose and end in view. And social beings are always divided into two factions that balance one another and contribute towards social well-being, those that think the existing order perfect and wish to retain it, and those who consider it evil and wish to change it, the partisans of the old God and of the new.

I had been gradually coming to the conclusion that Bolshevism was the gospel of the new God without knowing that I was coming to that conclusion. That

it was more virile and healthy than the old morality was obvious. The workers were the raw material from which it was to be fashioned, and they appealed to me as possessing most of the qualities that are inherent in the stuff of poetry. They were unhappy and rebellious and all beauty comes out of discontent and rebellion. Contentment, unless it be the momentary weariness after toil, and the repletion consequent on food, drink, or love, breeds boredom and stupidity. Then my place was in the army of the workers, because there lay the dynamic force that was going to bring a new beauty into the consciousness of man, a new poetry, a new consciousness of the universe. I was a communist. I swore allegiance to my new god, and felt exalted, like a girl realising that she is in love.

That evening I wandered about London looking for information about my new cult. My first contact with it was rather depressing. In a tiny shop I discovered a paper, called, I think, *The Workers' Dreadnought*. It contained nothing that was amusing, thrilling, or sensible, being mainly a series of badly written but vituperative articles denouncing individuals and groups who held practically the same opinions as itself. I have completely forgotten the policy of the paper, the name of its party and of its editor, but I remember the feeling of extreme disappointment caused by its perusal. We Irish are an exceedingly conservative race, and all our reactionary inhibitions rise in revolt when we are brought in contact with anything new. If something new wishes to win our support, it must be clothed with the tinsel of romance. In that respect we

are like the French. The most romantic event in the whole history of man was the French Revolution, because the French were the authors of it. In the hands of the Germans the same event would have been mainly concerned with the price of sausages, and the exact amount of money saved yearly by the community in passing from feudalism to democracy.

My disappointment made me stay in the office for another week. I gradually found that the attitude of the office people had changed. They no longer treated me in a friendly manner. The Scotchwoman bowed coldly when she met me. The directors treated me gruffly. I was under suspicion. They had learned that I was a communist.

Then one morning I was startled by the blowing of sirens and yelling in the street. Somebody ran into the office and cried that the war was over. Almost at once there was pandemonium everywhere. All sense of order and discipline vanished. People began to embrace in the streets. In the office the managing director was going about with a bottle of champagne, and telling everybody with tears in his eyes that both his sons were still alive. I was deeply impressed by the tenderness of the old fellow, whom I had regarded until then as a cold and callous money-grubber. How outrageously unjust are the judgments of youth!

But my egotism was proof even against the armistice. I immediately put on my hat and coat, left the office, and wandered about alone, looking with horror at the rejoicing multitude. I thought they should be in tears, mourning for those who had died: simply because this

sudden ending of that great drama aroused in myself a feeling of sadness. An end is always sad. It is a little proof that nothing lasts, whether good or evil.

I wandered about all day and night. The intoxication of the vast multitude increased until it seemed that the city was given over to loot; the most astonishing spectacle I have ever seen. There was no dignity in this rejoicing. It was bestial as the war had been. Here was no enthusiasm over the triumph of an idea, no hosannas to some glorious star risen in the firmament of human heroism. It was merely the riot of a mob in celebration of the victory of a mob over another mob, equally senseless. That barren and inglorious war, whose record is mud and noise and obscene poison, ended in a common debauch of drunkenness, gluttony, and fornication.

I watched it most of the night, and then towards dawn I travelled eastwards, making for the docks to find a ship and the sea.

CHAPTER SIX

I GO TO SEA

I HAVE the sea in my blood. I was born in a fishing village, within earshot of the great Atlantic main that licks the cliff-bound shores of Aran. It was the school in which we, as boys, were taught our manhood; and it was the school also, where I especially was taught by my mother to appreciate the beauty of nature. Just as the flowers, the little birds, the insects wandering on the earth, the sweet caressing winds of summer, and the great painter sun were for me the gentle, female half of beauty, so was the giant, ruthless sea the masculine, more beautiful because it was more strong. It was the greatest living thing in my environment. It was the great toy horse on which my infant body rode in a canvas-coated coracle, bandied by the heaving waves, whose majestic murmur, as old and endless as the world, sowed the rhythm of poetry in my soul. I have never heard more inspiring music than the thunder of that sea in anger, no military parade more inspiring than its ranked waves, maned with glittering foam, advancing on the shore. It was the theatre in which I saw performed dramas of heroic courage and endurance, whose memory still rouses my blood, thinking

proudly of those lean, blue-eyed fishermen who are my people. All romance was there encountered. Its teeming womb was our store-room. When sick we smelt its breath and chewed the grasses off its stranded bottoms, and were reconditioned in our health. When sad, we sat and listened to its moaning and lost our sorrow. It was our common mother as well as the father of our strength and knowledge.

But in my village I never knew a man who was a slave of the sea, such as hired sailors are, those who pass over the sea carrying cargoes for their masters. We lived like sea-hawks by its edge, without being outcasts from the land. We never made our home on the water.

Therefore, when I travelled to the London docks to find myself a berth upon a trading ship, I was as strange to that mode of life as one who had never seen the sea. Already an outcast from the mode of living of my ancestors, through the world knowledge that had made me discontented with the narrow scope of their experience, I was now going to become an outcast from the land.

That part of London is exceedingly dreary. The port of London is probably the most ugly port in the world, taken as a whole. Its vast hinterland of shabby streets, and dull taverns, would damp the ardour of the most romantic youth intent on becoming a seafarer. But I did not want to become a sailor. I merely wanted to get out of Europe. I expected nothing of this quarter, and was not disappointed when I found nothing.

Somewhere in Canning Town I had breakfast at a good pull-up for carmen, and while eating a pair of kippers, I got into conversation with the waitress, who seemed a kindly girl. I asked her where was the best place to look for a ship. She directed me to the Victoria docks. I arrived there at about eleven o'clock. Then, indeed, I was deeply impressed by the sailors I saw there. There was a multitude of them, hanging about the offices of the Board of Trade, as quaintly dressed and strange in their demeanour as the painters who hang about the artistic quarters of London and Paris. Here in their particular environment they had lost the gaucherie of manner which distinguishes them when they wander too far from their base. How extraordinary they look, waddling about the main streets in gangs, gaping at shop windows; how exciting they looked here, standing on widespread legs, their moody faces set in burlesque scowls, that were not born of anger, but of a conscious desire to look romantic and piratical. Not poverty so much as wanton childishness persuaded them to dress themselves in such gaudy rags. The lizards, anchors, wenches, hearts, snakes, and mystical devices scratched into their skins must have cost more than would furnish them with expensive clothes. Never have I seen shoes of such a brilliant yellow as I saw that day, or such astounding handkerchiefs, or belts with such odd buckles. A score of nations and nearly all the colours that deck the human hide were here represented, from the willowy Senegalese, so dignified in their decadent beauty, to the burly Scandinavians.

I stood quietly watching for a long time, lacking courage to approach any of these terrifying individuals for information. At last I noticed a tall, pale-faced Englishman standing near me. He looked more like a landsman than the others, because he was less bizarre. I thought at first that he was a coal-heaver or dock labourer, who, like myself, was going away to sea for the first time. He was dressed in a rather worn suit of blue serge, and he had a white silk muffler wrapt about his neck. On his tiny feet he wore black patent leather shoes. Then I came a few paces nearer, and saw that his eyes were discoloured around the rims in a curious manner; they seemed to have turned black and this blackness was outstanding because of the intense paleness of his face. His nostrils also were blackened, and when he opened his mouth to spit, I saw that his teeth were turning black. He was a fireman.

At last I went over and asked him how I could get a ship. He looked at me, spat once more, and then pointed to a board which I had not hitherto noticed. I looked. There were four names of ships on the board, and written after the names the hours at which they were to engage their crews.

'Three o' them's signed,' he said. 'The last packet is goin' to sign on now. What are ye lookin' for?'

He examined me and added:

'Steward, I suppose?'

'No,' I said. 'I'm not particular.'

'In that case,' he said, 'there's a deucer over there lookin' for trimmers. Have a word with him, laddie.'

I followed his directions, and approached a small man who was leaning against a window in another room, surrounded by a group of men, who were showing him papers. The small man was the 'deucer,' or second engineer, of the ship that was engaging her crew.

'Want a job?' he drawled.

'Yes,' I said eagerly.

'Got a book?'

'How do you mean?'

'Ever been to sea before?'

'No.'

'Got your army papers? You're a discharged soldier, are you?'

I showed him my papers. He glanced at them and said lazily, after looking me up and down:

'You'll do, I think. Stand by.'

He closed his notebook. A tall man with white moustaches came up and said to the second engineer:

'Got all your men, Jones?'

'Yes, sir.'

The tall man with the white moustaches, the chief engineer, looked at us, and nodded to a little squat fellow.

'You here, Parker?' he said.

'What's she goin' to be, chief?' said the little man. 'Five an' four again, chief?'

Nearly everybody laughed, and I laughed too, although I had no idea what the joke was: but I was very excited, and wanted very much to be initiated into the jargon of this strange profession.

After a while we were brought into another room.

There was the captain: a venerable gentleman with a beard, more like a professor than a seaman, with an officer of the Board of Trade. The ship's articles were read, and we all signed our names. Then we were given an advance note, and told to join the ship the following evening at nine o'clock. There were three of us going to sea for the first time, and we got identification cards, a sort of marine passport. Then we left the place.

I had got into conversation with a very talkative fellow, who was also signing on as a trimmer, and was making his first trip, like myself. He gave his name as Albert Jenkins. He belonged to a type which I had never encountered before, and which I now loathe when I encounter it, a disreputable parasite, a low, cringing ruffian, an unscrupulous pervert, a stranger to all manner of decency, a human coyote that preyed upon the weak and ignorant. Like all braggart heroes of the gutter, he had an engaging manner, a ready intelligence, and a long tale of all the injuries he had suffered at the hands of society. Lean and hungry looking, with a pasty, furrowed face, old before his youth was yet in flower, his budding manhood had been poisoned by the malignant vices of his upbringing. To hear him speak was to be terror-stricken by an account of his valour and virtuous nature. Now, he and the horde of his likes are dull and nauseous to me; but then, he, the first I had met, was so astonishing and strange, that I accepted him with delight as a new and refreshing form of humanity. So I affected a predilection for crime as sincere as his own.

I know my way around,' he said, talking as was his manner, through the left-hand corner of his mouth, with his upper lip raised and his head turned to one side, like a conspirator on the look-out for eavesdroppers. As he spoke, he put his mouth close to my face, so that I received the fetid odours of his breath full upon my nostrils. 'We'll go an' get our notes cashed, and then we'll have a drink. You leave it to me.'

He had a manner of walking in bursts, and then slowing up with a jerk of his shoulders. I afterwards met a cocaine addict who had the same habit, but I doubt if Jenkins had ever taken the stuff. It was more than likely the ghost of his conscience that was trying to arrest his flight from justice.

Near the dock gates Jenkins accosted a suspicious individual whose business it was to cash advance notes for sailors at a harsh discount. He was, I suppose, a land-shark, one of the tribe that preys upon seafaring men; but as I have never had a clear and sensible conception of the value of money I was very glad of his services, even though he charged me twenty-five per cent. With three pounds as a result of my morning's work, and the prospect of a sea adventure to follow in a few days' time, I felt extremely elated. We got on a tramcar, Mr. Jenkins and myself, on our way to the Green Man to slake our thirst.

'What was your last job?' he said.

'A clerk,' I answered.

'Ha,' he said, and winked very seriously. 'What did ye skip for?'

'Got fed up with the life,' I said.

He leaned over and whispered in my ear:

'You're all right with me, mate. I'm skipping myself. That's O.K. It's all one to me.'

Then he winked at me in a mysterious manner and twisted his mouth about so that I clearly understood he thought I was going to sea in order to evade justice.

We had several drinks, and then he invited me to his home for a meal. We went through a maze of narrow, mean streets, all of which looked exactly alike, until at last we entered a very small house. In a small but neat kitchen, an old hag was sitting by an open fire, cooking something in a pot. A buxom young woman was laying a table for dinner. Two men, one old and bald, the other young, with a face like a pugilist, were sitting near the window reading something from one newspaper, with their heads close together. All looked at me with suspicion, and the old woman said:

' 'Ullo Alf.'

' 'Ullo granny, 'ullo pop, 'ullo Maisie, 'ullo 'Arry,' said Mr. Jenkins, addressing them all, one after the other, as is the tiresome custom among cockneys. 'This bloke is a new mate of mine. We signed on the same ship to-day.'

'Got a ship, Alf?' said the girl excitedly.

'Yeah,' said Mr. Jenkins. 'The *R* –, bound for Boston, Mass.'

'Fine,' she said. 'Just what ye wanted, ain't it?'

'What about a little celebration, son?' said father Jenkins.

'I don't mind, pop,' said Alfred. 'You run out to the pub, Maisie.'

As he spoke, he looked at me, and made a grimace, as if to urge the money from my pocket. Even though I had somehow or other paid for all the drink at the public-house, I felt that I was now expected to pay for further drinks, so I handed the girl a ten-shilling note. She went away to fetch the beer. While she was gone, they questioned me about various things, and, being a trifle scared of my surroundings, I pretended to be extremely wise and experienced. They pretended to believe every word I said, and became very friendly and respectful, as if I were a champion boxer or a well-known killer of men. The girl returned with some beer and did not offer me any change. We had a mess of food and spent an hour or so afterwards drinking the beer. The old woman drank a lot of it, got drunk, and sang some old ballads in a hoarse voice. Then Alfred suggested a game of billiards. The father and both sons and myself went to a billiard-room. I was partnered by Harry and Alfred partnered pop. Pop and Alfred won, and as Harry was destitute, I had to pay for the table. By the time we had finished the taverns were open once more. We went to a house called the Blue Lion, as far as I can remember. There we met Maisie and another girl called Jane. There was a great crowd of seafaring men and a number of women. We all began to drink heavily. I gradually got attached to a large crowd, for whom I appeared to be the only one that was buying drinks. Then suddenly, while sitting on a leathered bench between two unknown young women, I roused myself, and realised in a blurred fashion that I was being subtly robbed of my money.

Together with the three pounds advance of pay I had received, there had been in my pocket about five pounds, the remains of my pension, six weeks of which I had drawn two days before. I was just going to examine my wallet to see how much I had left, when I overheard the conversation of the two women. They obviously thought I was asleep, because, leaning across my body, they were arguing as to which of them I belonged.

'Look here, Jane,' said one. 'You buzz off an' mind yer business. He spoke to me first. He asked me to have a drink.'

'He came with my Alf,' said Jane. 'You leave him alone. You just butted in. Alf told me to look after him.'

'So that's how it is,' I thought.

The two young women began arguing and then they began to fight. I made a great effort to pull myself together. I got to my feet, and moved to the door. The fight between the two women soon spread to the others, and in the tumult I managed to escape into the street, unnoticed, I thought. But Mr. Jenkins had seen me go out and followed me.

'Hey! Where are ye off to?' he cried, catching me by the shoulder.

I turned about, steadied myself, and shot out my left. I met him square on the jaw, and felled him like a sack. Instead of running as I should have done, I delayed to give him another, but while I was raising him in order to prop him against a wall for another smack, I myself was struck from behind on the nape of the neck. Stunned, I fell backwards into somebody's

arms. I felt a hand creeping into my breast-pocket. With my remaining strength, I pressed my arm against my breast over the hand, then twisting around my head, I bit the hand as hard as I could. The fellow howled and loosed his hold. Somebody else struck at me, but missed as I fell down to avoid the blow. Then I heard a cry of police, and my attackers ran away. I also ran. I jumped on a bus, and went as far as Aldgate. There I entered a public lavatory, took out my wallet, and examined its contents. There was only a ten-shilling note. Apparently, I had taken out all the other notes, and stuffed them into my trousers pockets. I searched my pockets. There I found eight shillings. One of the young women must have taken the money while I was sitting on the bench.

I wandered about feeling very miserable. I had to buy kit for going to sea, and I had no money with which to buy it. It was useless going off without any kit. The second engineer had warned me that I must get suits of dungarees, soap, various changes of underwear, shoes, sweat rags, socks, and towels, and a sea-bag, together with some gear for mending torn clothes. In despair I began to search once more, and to my great joy I found two pounds in the left-hand pocket of my overcoat. Whether I had put the money there through carelessness or through cunning I know not, but at that moment I did not trouble. I went at once and bought myself a night's lodgings. Then I went out to get some food.

After I had eaten, I turned to go back to my lodgings, but at a corner of Whitechapel Square, while I was

halted to allow some motor cars to pass, I noticed two giggling girls standing beside me. I smiled back at them, and we began to talk. They were two Jewish girls, dressmakers by trade. They told me they had a little shop of their own. They also told me that it was now difficult to find an interesting sweetheart, as most of the beautiful young men had been killed or maimed in the war, and those who were still alive and well had not been disbanded yet; would not be disbanded for some months.

'You must have a great time up west,' said one. 'There are many rich women would want you for a lover.'

'I bet he has one already,' said the other.

'No,' I said. 'I am a seaman. I signed on a ship to-day.'

'Don't be silly,' they both said together.

After I had persuaded them that this was the truth, they were greatly shocked, and warned me how exceedingly foolish my conduct was. They told me how pleasant it was ashore with a mistress or two, nights of love, and days of luxurious ease, with beer, billiards, dancing, and eating. Then I said that was very well, but it was difficult to get a pretty sweetheart. I did not want an old dry woman. Then they whispered together and one of them said seriously:

'We two, Elsie and I, have not got much money, and we are friends, so if you like we'll share you as a sweetheart, and we'll be very, very nice to you, because you are a very pretty boy.'

I laughed and said:

'But you can't expect me to look at you both.'

'Of course we can,' said Elsie; 'we shan't be jealous of one another, Bessie and I, because you'll love each of us.'

I shook my head.

'Oh! Do come on,' said Bessie. 'Come and stay a little while with us anyway. You can go away again if you don't like us.'

'Oh! Go to the devil,' I cried angrily, and I strode away churlishly, because I wanted very much to accept their charming hospitality, and yet some puritanical superstition forced me to leave them against my will.

After all, I really wanted to go to sea.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE STOKEHOLD

The following evening, when I came aboard, I found that the ship was sailing for Rio de Janeiro instead of Boston, Massachusetts. At first I felt disappointed, because my brother lived in Boston, and I had not seen him for ten years; but soon I felt delighted that I was going to South America. It appeared to be much more romantic than North America. However, the extraordinary environment in which I found myself did not allow of very much delight.

I had never been on board a tramp steamer in my life, and I did not believe that anything pertaining to the sea could be so dirty and repulsive. When I crossed the gangway, and looked around, the whole ship seemed to be a disorderly mass of rusty old iron, with refuse strewn on the decks. The surly night watchman was like a tramp, and there was nobody else in sight. I missed the smell of sails, and there was no sea lapping the ship's sides, and it rode perfectly still on the gloomy waters of the docks. The watchman directed me to the fo'c'sle. I climbed down a narrow hatchway, and then paused uncertainly at the bottom of the stairs. There were four doors, two on the right,

and two on the left. The two doors in front of me were ajar, and the other two, one on either side, were closed. On the port side, the open door led into the firemen's fo'c'sle and the closed door into the tiny cabin occupied by the greasers. On the starboard side, the open door led into the sailors' quarters, and the other door into the quarters of the bo'sun, the donkeyman, and the carpenter and the lamplighter. I saw men in both fo'c'sles, most of them drunk, and talking in loud voices, but I did not know to which fo'c'sle I belonged. Then a voice called from the port side:

'What are you for? The black gang?'

'I beg your pardon,' I replied.

'Oh Jesus!' said another voice. 'Listen to Burlington Bertie.'

'Are you on deck or below?' yelled the first voice.

'Below,' I yelled in a voice that was just as loud.

'Come on,' roared he. 'Step this way, and keep a tight grip on your kit, for this crowd came straight from the Scrubbs, or my name is not Peter McDonald.'

I stepped into the fo'c'sle, which was filled with two kinds of smoke, tobacco smoke, and smoke from the bogey fire, as the chimney of the latter was choked. There was one dim lamp hanging from the deck-head, shuddering spasmodically, when feet struck the fo'c'sle head. Some sailors were up there working at the winch, which made a noise like a heavy load of metal bolts being spilt down the throat of a big pipe. The room was of triangular shape, with tiers of bunks on two sides. A long deal table lay on the deck, a little to port,

with a deal form beside it on the port side. On the starboard side, beside the lower tier of bunks, there was another form. That was all the furniture. One porthole was open, but it only admitted an acrid fog that lay heavy on the river. The place looked horribly uncouth, and the men, whom I saw dimly through the smoke, looked even more uncouth than the place itself.

Up in the narrow angle at the forward end stood a Greek, bare to the waist, rubbing oil into his body. He had a beautifully shaped head, but devilish features, scarred and pock-marked, and his tawny skin was covered with pimples. I afterwards learned he had syphilis. A huge Russian, very drunk, lay in the bunk over the Greek. His waistcoat was open on his mountainous stomach, which rose and fell irregularly, as he lay on his back, grunting, exhausted by all he had drunk. The little cockney who had joked with the chief engineer was sitting on the edge of his bunk, with his feet dangling, taking off his collar and tie, and talking to another cockney who had just arrived, a man whom I have reason to remember distinctly, as will afterwards be shown. The little man, an experienced and extremely efficient fireman, was called Jack Parker, or Crumbs. The other man was called Scrapper Jones, formerly a stoker in the navy, from which he had deserted. He was powerfully built, with that pale, flabby face which is so deceptive in a cockney, for it conceals extraordinary agility and power of endurance and courage. There was, on the opposite side, a curly-haired, dark Irishman called Lucy, an excited youth, who was pulling off his shirt and telling

in a loud voice how he had loved a woman thirteen times on the previous night. McDonald, the man who had spoken to me, sat near the bogey lighting his pipe. He was the most impressive personality in the fo'c'sle, a tall, lean, dignified Scotchman, of powerful frame, about forty years of age. He was still fully dressed in his shore clothes. He looked clean, and I remember how surprised I was to find myself liking him for looking respectable, and almost bourgeois, since I had gone to sea in order to get away from the stagnant conventions of respectability. But I was really so appalled by the savage strangeness of these men, and their habitation, that I clung to any vestige, no matter how small, of the life I had hitherto known. Even a destitute wastrel in a common dosshouse would have appeared to be more congenial company than these men. Compared to this mode of life, the barrack-room offered luxuries beyond all comparison, and its manners became aristocratic.

Nobody took any notice of me as I walked with my kitbag to the starboard bench, and sat down. I felt very shy, and was afraid to ask anybody what to do, and I wished very much that I had stayed ashore or at least got a job as a steward. I wished that people would not curse so much or smell so badly. Now I felt ashamed of my clothes, which on shore had put me to shame very often through being shabby, but which were now outrageously out of place because they were much too smart, compared with the clothes worn by the others.

At last, McDonald went to his bunk, opened his

kitbag, and began to undress himself. He looked at me, and said:

'Got a bunk yet, sonny?'

'No,' I said. 'Which is mine?'

'Take any of them empty ones,' he said. 'First trip?'

'Yes.'

'Hop into an empty one. Ye chose a rotten ship, son, for yer first trip. She's one trimmer a watch.'

'Yes,' said Lucy, 'and what's worse, she's five an' four. That's the worst o' drink an' whorin'. Ye got to take the first ship that turns up when yer broke.'

'Look at me,' said Parker. 'I been on this tub before, an' I swore I'd never again set foot on her, an' here I am. Curse o' God on it, firemen are the lowest o' the low, an' serves em' right.'

They all began to curse the ship, the sea, engineers, bad coal, and all wished they had become dockers, navvies, farm hands, anything to stay on shore and sleep in proper beds, and have wives to love every night in the week. I became more and more melancholy.

'Where's those other two trimmers?' said Parker. 'They ain't turned up yet. I'm going to refuse to sail two hands short.'

I had forgotten my friend, Mr. Jenkins. Now I was terrified that he might turn up, because I was bound in honour to thrash him for the scurvy way he had fleeced me; yet, it would be extremely boring and embarrassing to do such a futile thing. One cannot gain any pleasure from cracking the life out of a flea

that has bitten one. I was more angry with my present situation than with Jenkins. Yet I hated him in a futile way, just as I detested all in the fo'c'sle except the respectable-looking Scotchman. I was suffering from a sort of psychological sea-sickness.

When I opened my kitbag, I became aware that my sea kit was as much out of place as my shore clothes, but on the opposite count. I had bought one suit of dungarees, which I had not examined but which had been stuffed into my bag by the old Jewess from whom I had made my purchases. When I put them on, the whole fo'c'sle burst into uproarious laughter. They were white, a ridiculous colour in the stokehold, where everything assumes the black colour of coal. The trousers were too short, reaching only half-way down my calves, and so narrow that my thigh muscles bulged through them, as if I were wearing a pair of tights. The jacket would not button on my chest. It did button at first, but when I moved, and my chest expanded slightly, all the buttons burst. The jacket sleeves were almost at my elbow. I felt so ridiculous, that I got furiously angry at their laughter. One man in particular irritated me, Jones, who had deserted from the navy.

'You look like a fancy boy,' he said. 'Are you?'

'You'll look like a wet week,' I said, 'if you don't shut your mouth.'

'Come on, then,' he said, squaring up.

Just as we were about to fall on one another, the second engineer entered the fo'c'sle.

'Are you all here?' he cried.

'Keep quiet, you blokes,' cried McDonald.

Glaring at one another, the naval deserter and myself retreated to our bunks.

'See you again,' he muttered.

'You bet your life you will,' I retorted. 'Have some coppers ready.'

'You'll need a whole cow,' he said, 'for the black eyes I'm goin' to give ye.'

'Silence there,' said the second engineer. 'Are you all aboard?'

'Two . . . trimmers are missing,' said Parker.

'Hold on,' said McDonald. 'Here's somebody coming now.'

'Lumme,' said Parker, 'look at what the cat brought in.'

'Order there,' said the engineer.

Jenkins and another tiny man entered the fo'c'sle. Now that I was angry, I had forgotten my shyness and embarrassment, and I wanted to punish Jenkins at once, but that gentleman took no notice of me whatsoever. Although he had never been to sea, he was perfectly at home, and dashed into the fo'c'sle with the air of a commercial traveller entering a hotel where he was very well known.

'Hello everybody,' he cried.

He looked odd, wearing pointed, patent leather shoes, a check cap, and a wild necktie of an orange and purple colour. His cunning eyes and his jerky movements were alien, for although the others were uncouth in their manners, they had not the unpleasant personality of this street criminal.

'What's your name?' said the second engineer to this bold cutpurse.

'Jenkins is my name,' said Jenkins.

'Sir to me, if you don't mind,' said the engineer.

'Yes, sir,' said Jenkins in a more subdued tone.

The engineer began to read out the watches.

'What's your name?' he said to me.

'Bill Ganly, sir.'

'He'll trim for the eight to twelve with you and Lucy, McDonald,' he said to the Scotchman.

'If you give the lad a suit of dungarees out of the slop chest, he'll do all right,' said McDonald.

'There's no slop chest,' said the engineer. 'Where did you get that house-painter's rig, Ganly?'

There was another burst of laughter. I noticed that Jenkins joined heartily in the laughter, and pretended never to have seen me before. I nodded my head towards him grimly, as much as to say:

' I'll settle with you later.'

'Jenkins,' said the engineer, 'you trim on the four to eight with Parker and Jones.'

'Suits me fine,' said Jenkins, going towards Jones and Parker. 'You blokes are Londoners, ain't you?'

The three of them began to chat. The tiny fellow, whose name was Plugg, was told off to trim on the twelve to four watch with the enormous Russian and the poxy Greek.

'Get below the eight to twelve,' said the engineer. 'Come on. Are you ready? Get steam up as soon as you can.'

'Ain't you got a sweat rag, sonny?' said McDonald to me.

'What's that?' I said.

I had never heard of a sweat rag. The Scotchman tipped a webbed strip of kerchief he wore around his neck.

'Here,' said Lucy. 'Take this one.'

We left the fo'c'sle. On that ship, when the coal bunkers were full, there was no separate entrance to the stokehold. So we had to go down through the engine-room. I was deeply impressed, and rather terrified, by the beautiful machines, which the greasers were tending, prior to their being set in motion for their long journey. Then we came into the stokehold. That had quite a different effect on me. It was impressive and terrifying also, but it had no beauty. Imagine a high-roofed corridor with a dusty iron wall on one side, and on the other, three enormous, dusty boilers, each containing three fires. A ventilator shaft was near the starboard boiler. A tunnel led to the bunkers through the rear wall. It looked like an enormous forge, with long slices for raking the fires, and crowbars for stirring them, shovels for feeding them, hammers for breaking coal and clinkers.

McDonald told me what to do. He showed me a wheel-barrow and gave me a shovel. I was to fill the barrow with coal, and wheel it out to the fires. I found that easy enough, as the coal was half-way down the tunnel, and I had not far to carry it, and the fires were not using much, being yet in process of lighting. The stokehold was cool, and in the intervals of wheeling

the coal I had to keep near a boiler to get warm. A cold wind was coming down the ventilator. I began to feel conceited, as the work of shovelling and pushing loosened my muscles, stiffened my chest, and rid my stomach of stultifying vapours. I began to whistle popular tunes. This offended McDonald, who spent his spare time grousing with Lucy about the ship. I could not see what they had to grouse about as they were most of the time idle.

'Look here, sonny,' said McDonald, 'you won't be whistling on watch in a week's time. You take it from me, the best thing you can do is save your breath.'

I called the watch, and then carried buckets of hot water to the fiddley, where we were to wash coming off duty. There was no such thing as a bathroom on that old ship. Returning to the stokehold, I wheeled out heaps of coal and threw them in front of each boiler in order to give my successor a start. We were relieved, we washed, lay down in our bunks, and smoked for a while. When I was awakened in the morning by the trimmer of the four to eight watch, I found that the ship had put to sea.

This time when I descended into the stokehold, I found that it was stifling hot. Almost at once sweat poured out through all my pores. My silly white dungarees clung to my thighs like moist paper. Having no singlet, my flesh above the hips was scorched. It was difficult to breathe, and I had to stand by the open furnace while McDonald cleaned his dirty fire. One fire in each boiler is cleaned each watch. As he pulled out the great hot lumps of charred coal I stood by with

a bucket of water, and when he rushed back, exhausted by the heat of the clinkers that lay in a heap at his feet, crying 'Agua,' I hurled the water, ran to the pump, fetched another bucket, and hurled that also. A stench ascended into my nostrils from the wet ashes. But in spite of the heat and the stench, that was very exciting, like a battle, fighting the flames. Some of the larger clinkers were rooted to the bars of the fire, and I had to haul on the crowbar with McDonald to loosen them. When he had finished I had to coal the bars, which means shovelling in a pile of coal on the clean fire. That job was repeated three times, a period of furious excitement, both for me and for the firemen, who had to work very fiercely keeping up steam with the full fires, while the low fires were being cleaned.

By the time the fires were cleaned, there was nothing left of the heaps of coal brought to the stokehold by my predecessor. I had to get my barrow, and wheel in about ten loads. That was not very difficult, because the coal was still in the tunnel leading to the bunkers. I liked the work, especially as the air was cooler in the tunnel. It was like going under a cold shower on a hot day, feeling the draught of wind in the tunnel sweeping along my sweating back.

When I had finished with the coal, I had to tackle the unpleasant job of clearing the ashes from the stokehold. First the large clinkers had to be broken with a hammer. More water had to be spilt on the heaps in order to cool them sufficiently to allow of their being handled. Then I raked out the ashes from the furnace pits. These little heaps of fine yellow ashes were also

drenched until they cooled. Then I shovelled all together in one heap. Then I got ash bags and filled them, while Lucy held open their mouths. There were only three ash bags. Then I climbed up to the fiddley, and let down the rope, with an iron hook at its end, which was rolled around a sort of winch. The hook rattled down the ventilator, Lucy attached a bag to it, and cried, 'Heave away.' I hauled it up, caught it, brought it to the ship's side, emptied it overboard, and threw the empty bag down the ventilator. At once I began to haul up another. After a while the bags became a tremendous weight. By now my back was getting sore, and my muscles ached. The stench of the warm, wet ashes was most unpleasant, but I was excited, and proud of being able to do this work, which is about the hardest that man can do, and especially doing it on the most difficult ship afloat. So I did not mind my exhaustion and kept at it full speed until I had the last bag dumped into the sea. As the last bag was coming up the shoot, McDonald called up after it:

'Hurry down, sonny. The plates are empty.'

'Righto.'

Again I had to seize my barrow and wheel load after load into the stokehold. My reserves of strength were disappearing just as fast as the coal I brought to the furnaces was devoured by the shovels of the two firemen. Now, when I lifted a full barrow, every muscle in my body ached, as if I were drawn asunder between two horses galloping in opposite directions. Great beads of sweat fell to the deck as I bent over my

shovel. At last they stopped firing, and sat under the ventilator. I slackened my pace, brought out three more barrow-loads, and then paused for breath.

'Well, sonny,' said McDonald, 'd'ye want to whistle now?'

'Certainly I do,' said I. 'What would you like?'

'Come over here and have a blow,' said Lucy. 'The kid'll do all right. Ye can't beat the old country. Roll a ciggy for yerself. I'll give ye a hand in a minute.'

We all stood under the ventilator and smoked. It was lovely feeling the cold wind coming down the ventilator shaft upon my back and legs. Except for a terrible thirst I felt very happy. It is dangerous to drink water in the stokehold, at least in sufficient quantity, unless there is oatmeal stewed in it.

McDonald had taken off his singlet. I noticed how the ribs stuck out against his skin. He was just like an old horse. Yet he was not old. His body had been bleached dry by the furnaces. He terrified me, and I vowed I should never go to sea again in the stokehold. At the same time, I felt an extraordinary pride at being able to do my work. I swayed with the ship's movement, and expanded my chest and felt the power of my lungs. How good it is to be young and strong, and in the company of strong, simple men, labouring with tools!

'This is nothing,' said Lucy. 'Wait till the bitch gets near the line. The rotten tub shouldn't be let go to sea.'

I was hardly able to climb the ladder to the deck when I went to call the watch. It was bitterly cold on

deck, but I did not feel the cold. I brought dinner from the galley for the twelve to four watch. Then I returned to the stokehold to wheel out a relief of coal. When we had washed and eaten our dinner, I fell asleep at once. I kept having dreadful nightmares, passing from one to another without waking at the crises. I was too exhausted even to be terrified by nightmares. When I returned to the stokehold at eight o'clock I was very stiff and melancholy. But as soon as the sweat began to ooze from my pores I felt strong once more.

She certainly was a dreadful ship. For three days there were continual quarrels in the fo'c'sle. The bloated Russian was unable to do his work properly. Neither was the syphilitic Greek efficient. The tiny cockney trimmer was still worse. The other watches had to suffer for the helplessness of the four to eight watch. The second engineer was continually coming into the fo'c'sle complaining. There were also quarrels with the sailors, and quarrels with the cook about the food, which was almost inedible. The bogey always smoked. There were hordes of bugs in the fo'c'sle. The coal was bad. And yet, according as life became more unpleasant and difficult, my spirits rose, and I began to enjoy being a trimmer. I grew hard. I no longer minded the stifling heat, or the terrific work. I felt equal to my comrades, and could use oaths as foul as theirs. My habits became just as coarse. I wolfed my food like a dog, developed a contempt for dirt, and ceased to think or to be sensitive about myself.

We were flying through the ocean southwards from bleak northern winter to the warm sun. Every day the sky grew brighter, and at night the air grew warmer and more calm. I began to dream of South America, of humming birds, and beautiful brown women.

At night, going to wake the watch, I used to turn towards the south, and smell the air. It was marvellous! Young, care-free, plunging towards a romantic, tropic land, innocent, still believing that the unknown contained fairylands as wonderful as my childhood's dreams had fashioned them.

The harder the work became, the more wonderful it was to dream of those tropical lands towards which we flew.

One night I saw a flying-fish flapping in the water on the deck beneath the pump. The lamps had made the dripped water flash, and the fish had come towards the light. I lifted the pretty thing in my hands, and ran with it to the fo'c'sle. I awakened everybody from sleep, crying:

'Look! Look! Is this a flying-fish?'

They cursed at me. They were not interested. They had been seeing them for years, and were not interested. Then I dropped the wriggling fish through the porthole.

CHAPTER EIGHT

KNOCKED OUT BY STOKER JONES

I HAD not forgotten Mr. Jenkins. Whenever I met him, I felt a tremendous urge to punch him in the jaw; especially as he affected to treat me as a perfect stranger and with a great deal of contempt. He was a poor trimmer, but his mates, owing to some favour he conferred on them, helped him with his work, and did not complain of him. On the other hand, the tiny trimmer of the twelve to four watch, being worse than Jenkins, got no help from the enormous Russian and the Greek, and seemed on the point of dying after each watch. He used to creep like a sick cur into his bunk, wearing a ridiculous white shirt like an old man. He slept on his stomach, huddled up like a baby in its cot, and the fellows used to lift up his shirt as they passed, and hit him resounding whacks on the rump. Jenkins treated him with particular cruelty, claiming that the little fellow left his ashes in the stokehold, did not clean his ashpits, and never left enough coal for the relief; all of which was quite true. But then Jenkins was equally at fault as far as I was concerned. Our watch was the only honest one of the three.

One afternoon, just after the twelve to four had gone down, and little Plugg was crawling into his bunk without washing himself, Jenkins returned to the fo'c'sle, swearing most obscenely. He pulled the little chap out of his bunk, settled him against the side of the upper bunk, and began to batter his face. Plugg began to howl, and then sank down into his bunk almost unconscious.

I ran over to Jenkins, caught him by the shoulder with my right hand, and knocked him clean out with a left to the jaw.

'Well done,' said McDonald from his bunk. 'That shore rat should never have been let board a ship. Give him a few kicks. He has no friends.'

'For Jasus' sake,' said Lucy, 'will ye throw a bucket of water on him, or he'll never be able to go on watch. You'll have to go below in his place.'

Jenkins struggled to his feet, looked at me savagely, and swore that I'd pay for this. Then he left the fo'c'sle. As a result of this incident there was great tension in the fo'c'sle. The four to eight watch never spoke to our watch.

Next day the enormous Russian was carried up out of the stokehold in agony. He had drunk a quantity of cold water and collapsed. In spite of his size, the fellow was no good. I am always suspicious of great, flabby men. Now what was to be done? A Dane among the deck hands came to the rescue. He was a student who was trying to earn enough money to finish some sort of medical course, a gentle, brooding fellow, whom one always noticed sitting apart on the

fo'c'sle head when off watch, reading a big book. He went below for the extra money.

Two days later, when I came into the fo'c'sle at midday after watch, to fetch my towel and soap, Jones, the cockney, slid from his bunk and said:

'Where did you get that towel?'

I turned around, stared at him, and said:

'What are you talking about? Talking to me?'

'Yes. You. Where did you get that towel?'

'What's that got to do with you?'

'Its my towel.'

'You're a liar, fat-face.'

'You pinched my towel, thief.'

'I wouldn't use your towel for a sweat rag, you pox box.'

'In any case, you're a coward.'

'Righto. Come on deck.'

The affair of the towel had been obviously an excuse to provoke a quarrel with me, simply because I had knocked out Jenkins, his watch mate. It was a foul moment for a challenge, since I was coming exhausted off watch, and he was coming fresh from his bunk. Yet I had no alternative but to fight at once. The odds were otherwise against me. I had the advantage in height and reach, but I was giving away at least eighteen pounds in weight, and an incalculable amount in experience, since Jones had been a professional prize-fighter of considerable merit, while I was never any use in the ring as a boxer. But at that moment, all those considerations were of no account in face of our mutual anger.

Followed by the whole crew off watch, both sailors and firemen, we went on deck. A ring was made on the clear space of deck on the port side of the for'ard hatch. The captain and the other officers, the ship's cook and the galley boy, the apprentices and the steward, and the carpenter, all came to points of vantage in order to watch the fight. It was a beautiful day, and the ship rode easily on the calm sea.

By the time we were ready to fall upon one another I had lost my anger, and grown calm, the worst thing that could happen to me, since I was ignorant of the art of boxing. Had I retained my fury I would have rushed in pell-mell, and prevented myself trying to box.

We wore no gloves, and there were no rounds. McDonald started us. Jones led off smartly with a feint to my jaw, and then a heavy punch to my ribs over the heart. I staggered to my knees, gasped, and then got up at once, furiously angry. For some reason, instead of following up his advantage, he dodged about, sparring, allowing me time to recover. Then I suddenly attacked him, striking first with my right to his chest, and following with my left to his jaw. He went down on his back like a skittle pin. I thought he was out. The crowd roared. Parker ran over to Jones.

'Come on, mate,' he cried. 'Up an' at 'im.'

'Leave it to me,' said Jones, getting up calmly.

I had missed his jaw, and my knuckles had torn the skin off his face half-way up his cheek. His cheek and his nose were bleeding freely. He put up his guard, shook his head, and began to blow the blood from his nostrils.

'In on him now while he's groggy,' cried McDonald. 'Polish him off.'

But somehow, I could not rush in. The blow which felled Jones had exhausted my anger, and pushed the knuckle of my left forefinger back an inch. That hand was now practically useless. I felt extremely silly, looking at Jones' bloody face, and his snarling mouth. I felt like saying:

'Come on, boy. We've both been down. Let's cry quits, and shake hands.'

'In on him, you Irish tyke,' cried McDonald. 'Don't spare him.'

I just waited for Jones to begin. Jones began to prance about, growling, and making little jabs. Then suddenly he came on like a whirlwind, raining body blows. I swung at his head stupidly, but I might as well be trying to hit a butterfly with a wisp of straw. Before I knew exactly what had happened, I received an uppercut, which sent me to the deck. Badly hurt, and extremely groggy, I struggled to my knees, and then sank once more.

'He's out,' said Parker. 'Well done, Jones.'

That roused me. With a great effort, I jumped to my feet, crying:

'Whoever said I was out is a liar.'

Taking Jones off his guard, I swung at him with my right, struck him on the right ear, and sent him reeling into the group of firemen that were standing against the rails. If they had not been there, I swear he would have tumbled overboard. Now I forgot that my left hand was injured, and followed him hotly, with

my left outstretched. Instead of hitting Jones with it, I struck Parker's right arm, as the latter intentionally thrust himself in the way in order to save his comrade.

'Foul,' cried Lucy.

'It is a foul,' I cried. 'Take that for your trouble, Parker.'

As I was going to strike Parker, McDonald held me back. An argument began.

'What's on now?' cried the chief engineer from the bridge. 'Keep order there, and get on with the bloody fight. Get done with it.'

Again a ring was made, and Jones and myself squared up to one another. By now all the fight had gone out of me. The exhaustion consequent on four hours in the stokehold began to manifest itself. If Jones had not been almost as groggy as I was, he could have polished me off at once, because he was hitting me just as he pleased, and the blows I aimed at him in return were extremely feeble, never touching him, except once when he ran on to a right swing which brought him down. But I also fell, being so weak that I lost my balance.

We both staggered to our feet and stood still, punching one another slowly like a pair of tired fighting cocks. Then I went down again. My ribs now ached. But I got up again, only to be sent down at once. McDonald afterwards told me that I was knocked down twenty-seven times, before I finally stayed down, being unable to get to my feet.

'Do ye quit?' cried Jones, bending over me.

'Like hell I do,' I cried, reaching out to catch him by the knees.

He fell over me and we grappled. Then the others came in and separated us.

'Shake hands now,' said McDonald. 'Ye both fought well.'

Jones and myself shook hands, and began to laugh hysterically. I have rarely felt so friendly to a man as to that flabby-faced cockney, who had the endurance of a bulldog. But my God! What a licking he had given me. There was not a single inch above my waist to the crown of my head that did not feel sore, and anybody who has ever received even one hard punch from a good hitter knows how sore it is. But even then, male conceit would not allow either of us to surrender, so we stayed on deck with our cronies, smoking and pretending to be very jolly. Then we went to the steward for some lotion.

Even although I had lost my fight, actually, all the crew treated me as if I had won, and I became quite a personage on board. The engineer on our watch, a tall, powerful man, of a simple disposition, took an especial interest in me, and when there was a quiet spell below, we used to spar in the stokehold. But after a few lessons I refused to have any more of it, as he took occasion, either by accident or through sadistic tendencies, to hit me rather hard. Of course, since he was an officer, I could not hit back. When I refused to spar with him he became extremely indignant and harsh towards me. Until finally when he was badgering me one hot day for not having enough coal on the plates, I caught up a hammer and went for him. Then he proved to be an arrant coward, for he ran out of the

stokehold into the engine-room. I threw the hammer on the plates, cursed, and said I was finished working on that ship. I walked on deck, followed by Lucy, who urged me to come back.

'No,' I said. 'I'm hanged if I will.'

There was a great hubbub. The chief engineer, who was a surly and discontented man, appeared from his cabin, followed by the officer of our watch.

'What's this?' cried the Chief. 'Mutiny?'

'Oh! Go to hell,' I cried.

They hauled me before the captain. Seeing that my position was rather serious, I pretended to be more excited than I was. I knew I had a trump card up my sleeve. The captain was a kindly man, extremely well-bred and gentle in his manners for a captain in the merchant service. When the fourth engineer had stated his case, the captain asked me to state mine. I told him the facts, and then added that I was extremely sorry for what had happened, but that I was not entirely responsible for my actions in such heat, as I had been blown-up during the war, had been unconscious for three weeks, and been warned by the army medical authorities to keep away from any form of excitement or rigours of climate. He asked me for my army papers. I showed them. Then he told the others to leave the cabin.

He called the steward, and ordered him to give me a drink. I think it was some bromide. He gave me a cigarette, and talked to me quietly like a father. He said a son of his had been killed in the war, and although he had not served himself in any important capacity, he understood how horrible the war must have been,

and appreciated what the young men had suffered. He made me feel very much ashamed of myself, and I felt like an impostor, confronting this venerable man, who had spent the best part of a matured life in the useful service of society, with my paltry achievements, which were merely what an adventurous youth felt impelled to do, not through idealism, but with the selfish desire to take part in a world drama.

Then he told me that no matter how much he would like to overlook my escapade with the engineer, he must maintain discipline. He could put me in irons, but he would merely log me, and transfer me to another watch. I thanked him, and left the cabin.

I was transferred to the twelve to four watch, and Plugg took my place on the eight to twelve watch. I felt lonely leaving Lucy and McDonald. At sea one gets very fond of one's immediate comrades. But I was compensated for their loss by the extraordinary character of the Greek, who was one of my new mates. The Dane was a dull fellow, taciturn and solitary. The Greek was garrulous, unprincipled, gay, and extremely interesting.

During our first watch together, he slapped me on the back, and said it was a pity I had not killed the engineer. He said all the officers, including the captain, were a lot of skunks. All officers on all ships were skunks and robbers. He would like to bore a hole in the ship's side, and sink her were it not for the fact that he would have to sink with the ship. He said that he had had syphilis three times. By now it did not hurt him very much, but that great heat was bad for it.

'Fight!' he said, spreading his arms in a great gesture. 'The box fight is no good. Too much like mashing potatoes. I always fight with the knife. One trip when I was on deck I fight with a Spaniard with knives. We were in Valparaiso. He says I stole his girl in a dance-hall. We fought for two hours with knives. Like this.'

He crouched, and began to dance about with his right hand raised, and his left hand guarding his body.

'Great fight. He swear very loud to terrify me. At last he stuck me in the thigh. Look, scar.'

I could see no scar on his yellow hide.

'All my life I have fights over women. Women love Greeks and Chinamen. A Chinaman is like a snake. That is why they love him. Greeks have bodies like pagan gods.'

'What happened yours?' I said. 'Gone astray in the laundry?'

'Never mind,' he said. 'One thing you remember. There is no god, no country for a sailor. Your country is your pocket, and your god the hand that keeps your money there.'

He was a thorough scoundrel, took no interest in his work, had no feeling of solidarity with his work-mates, and malingered as much as he could. He took shelter from the proper shame due to his idleness under the cloak of all sorts of shabby revolutionary mottoes and theories, which he had picked up like a parrot around the world, having no conception of their idealistic meaning, using only their evil side for his own base purposes. But he was much more interesting than the Dane, who was a worthy fellow.

I have always found it so. A Falstaff is always more interesting than a 'good' character. Still, it is odd that modern Greeks are so different from the heroic characters that created ancient Greek civilisation? Or were they also slick, oily, and unreliable, thieving, treacherous, lazy, and diseased?

We were approaching Rio de Janeiro. With every watch the work became more difficult and the whole stokehold crew was getting exhausted, all except the enormous Russian, who lay in his bunk, groaning. The scoundrel ate all that was given to him, but managed to stay lying up because his heart was bad. We all abused him, because everybody believed he was malingering. He was in no wise affected by our abuse. With his hands clasped on his stomach, he lay all day on his back, until food came to him, or he had to go to the lavatory. He was in no way responsible for the difficulty of the work, since the Dane was much more efficient as a fireman than he was. But we had to blame somebody. Plugg seemed to have lost every ounce of flesh on his body. The only man who was bearing up well was Jenkins. His comrades, for some extraordinary reason, did pratically all his work.

I myself also bore up fairly well, for the reason that I intended leaving the ship at Rio de Janeiro. Every hour brought me nearer my goal. We could already smell the land. It was wonderful.

Then one morning we saw it, dim on the horizon. Land. Brazil. I danced with joy.

CHAPTER NINE

ON THE BEACH

I DOUBT if there is any place in the world as beautiful as Rio de Janeiro. From the moment our ship entered the narrow neck of its gorgeous harbour I was entranced. Across the smooth bay, littered with ships and pretty boats, lay the city, rising in terraces, with majestic mountains behind, and the great sugar-loaf, like a stupendous monument, on the left. Trees and tropical plants everywhere. Everything resplendent with brilliant sunlight. No dirt, no smoke, seemingly no slums. Astonishing, like a fairy tale. Facing this phenomenon of beauty, I forgot that I was penniless, that my nostrils, my eyes, and my fingers-nails were blackened with coal dust, that my clothes were shabby, that I was an unknown and unwanted stranger. It seemed to lie before me, waiting for ravishment. I wanted to jump from the ship's side and swim ashore, lest one extra moment of my life should be wasted before I began the enjoyment of this miraculous city.

I saw a great sign facing the shore: 'Bebam Antartica.' Certainly, I was going to drink Antartica, and every other possible drink. I was going to live there in a continual ecstasy of unimaginable pleasures. The

whole crew was almost equally excited. Some had been there already, and knew that it is more comfortable to stand in the rain without an overcoat beside the wall of a ruined factory than to stand in golden moonlight on a warm night outside the brilliantly lit windows of a great house, where there is a riot of merry-making, of wine-drinking, and love-making, and gluttonous feasting. But sailors are easy to please, and they always expect the impossible.

At first we lay at anchor in the harbour, and a fleet of tiny boats came around us, offering to sell us oranges and pineapples. They also had bottles of gashasa, which is a native whisky of great power. This they offered to us secretly. It was amusing to bargain with them in pidgin Portuguese: 'Quanto costa the oranges? Too much. Quanto the bloody pineapples?' But we bought nothing. We remained at anchor all that night, greedily watching the brilliant lights of the city. We could hear music from the shore. It was wonderful seeing the seemingly endless row of lights spreading out to the left towards Tres Jardines, or whatever the suburb is called.

Lucy, leaning over the rails by my side, said in a hoarse whisper:

'It's all one big whore-house. I wish I were ashore.'

That night in the fo'c'sle, everybody talked of women, women, women. I really felt very exalted, in the same way that I felt when for the first time I saw from the deck of the steamer *Duras* the yellow houses of Salthill drift along as we approached the ancient town of Galway. I was then a little boy at my

mother's side. It was sunset in summer. She pointed ahead over the ship's prow, and said:

'Look. There's Galway. Do you see it?'

I was unable to answer her with excitement. I just clutched at her dress and blushed, and stood on tiptoe, keeping very close to her side, and looked in awe at the dun pile of grey stone houses rising above the shimmering waters of the bay.

That was the first, this was the last time I experienced such a mixed feeling of awe and romance. Now one town is the same as another to me, each country as dull and commonplace as the next, each person intrinsically as disappointing as the previous one I have met. The visible world and the movements of man upon it have both become completely absorbed by my imagination, which has gone farther than reality to create its needed harmony and only looks out upon reality with a frown, and seizes upon its various aspects with remote and critical interest, merely to imagine harmony more vividly by contrast with disappointing reality. How unhappy that makes one! How pleasant it is to look at the world with the amazed eyes of a child, crowing with glee on sight of a butterfly's wings! How pleasant it is to remain a child, and shout hurrah at the sight of one's country's flag, or to laugh immoderately and sincerely at a bawdy story told by a commercial traveller! The rash ecstasies of the inward-gazing intellect exact a heavy toll in the form of consequent depressions, whereas simplicity and ignorance always look outward, and feed healthily upon the giant stores of the earth's phenomena.

Next morning we drew alongside the pier, and a gang of workmen came aboard to unload the ship. We set to work overhauling the boilers. We were not allowed ashore until evening. The Brazilian workmen were astonishing creatures. They worked naked to the waist, chattering all the time. There seemed to be no order among them. They were nearly all coloured. The Portuguese among them looked utterly decadent, but the negroes were of a fine physique, and merry of disposition. At meal-time I talked to some of them. They were very interested to know what Europe and North America were like. Had I seen snow? What was it like? Did people die of the cold in the north? They were like children, but without the delicate beauty of children. They repelled me. The gorgeous city began to lose its glitter as soon as I came in contact with its inhabitants. The loungers on the quays were even more decadent than the workmen. They had withered faces, and their movements were slow. They looked dissipated.

But I was determined to hold fast to my romantic vision, and I told myself that the mere scum of a city's population hangs around docks. Beyond, in the magnificent thoroughfares, I was going to meet glorious types of humanity, worthy of such a splendid city. Would evening never come?

It came at last. I dressed, bade good-bye to the ship, and went ashore. I had eighteen shillings and sixpence in my pocket; not an enormous sum with which to set forth into a foreign country in search of adventure. I changed it for Brazilian money at a money-changer's

booth near the docks, and headed for the city. In a short time, after passing through a few shabby side streets and ruins, I reached the Avenida Centrale. Then, indeed, it seemed that my dream had come true, for the loveliness of that thoroughfare overwhelmed me. I walked up and down its whole length several times before I could leave it. Then, being weary and thirsty and lonely, I cut into a side street and wandered along, hoping to meet some sailor-men. As I was standing uncertainly at a corner, a newsboy came up to me, looked at me, and then said:

'Rua Vasco da Gama?'

'Eh?' I said.

'Johnny want plenty . . . ?' he said with a grin.

I was exceedingly mortified. It seemed to me that by going to sea I had become physically branded, and that henceforth, whenever I went ashore anywhere, corner-boys would rush up and show me the way to a brothel, such being the only place fit for a seafarer's company. I made a kick at him, but he dodged nimbly aside, and said in broken English he would show me the way for two hundred reis. I tried to hunt him several times, but he clung to me with great persistence, and at last I gave him a penny to get rid of him. He was very grateful, told me how to get to the Rua Vasco da Gama, what sort of women were there, and what they did with sailor-men, illustrating everything with obscene gestures. Then he dashed off yelling the name of his newspaper at the top of his voice. A perfectly happy little scoundrel.

I was ashamed of admitting to the ragged newsboy

that I really wanted to go to the brothel quarter; but as soon as he had gone, I eagerly used the directions he had given me. Yet I had no intention of having any physical relations with the harlots. That is the attitude of the vast majority of men towards the social disease of harlotry. It is extremely rare to find a man who has not had some sort of relation with a harlot in his life; yet it is equally difficult to find a man who will admit publicly that he has had such relationship. It is an interesting form of hypocrisy, but a perfectly natural one, in no manner reprehensible. No man deliberately sets out to have relations with a harlot, except in case of actual physical necessity, drunkenness, or curiosity. Sailors, students, and soldiers are the general mainstay of the common sort of harlotry, simply because these groups of individuals are generally poor, unknown socially, and vigorous in health. Being unable to afford wives, or expensive mistresses, and not having sufficient capital and address to procure themselves satisfaction by seduction, they purchase cheap loves. Drink adds its quota to the harlot's earnings from among the most diverse classes, from clergymen to scavengers. Finally there are men who, rendered perverse by the dullness of their family life, seek in a brothel the excitement of the senses which is denied them at home.

Harlotry is almost everywhere looked upon as an obscene profession, yet it is hard for an honest and clear-thinking man to see why it is so. It is quite easy to understand why women who are not professional harlots are opposed to professional harlotry, since,

under social conditions that recognise the rights of private property, the harlot is a poacher on the rights of marriage, which, in turn, is the respectable woman's chief means of livelihood. The harlot, to put it crudely, retails what the respectable woman sells wholesale for a fixed annuity, and various other emoluments, personal and social. Again, the harlot leads a riotous life, and if she is intelligent, attractive, and well versed in her art, prospers considerably, and has numbers of handsome lovers without doing any unpleasant work, while the righteous wife has to labour and be content.

The anger of celibates is also understandable. They object to the ease with which unchaste men can procure the satisfaction of their carnal lusts without incurring the burden of a family. So also is the anger of rustics and uncouth mountainy beggars, who never have an opportunity of visiting a brothel, owing to their remoteness from civilisation and their poverty. But the reproving attitude of the average civilised man is less easy to understand.

There is, of course, the question of disease. It is a fact that harlots are the chief carriers of sexual diseases nowadays.

There is also the fact that, in general, harlots manage their affairs very badly, by robbery, and a callous treatment of their customers. That also is the fault of society, which persecutes the harlot with one hand while it tolerates her with the other, thus making her skittish in her code of honour, and imbuing her with a stupid anger against those that traffic with her.

The one healthy reason why all decent men should

object to the harlot is because she is barren, as a rule, whereas the most beautiful instinct in man is that which impels him to seek immortality through procreation. For that reason alone harlotry as a profession must be allowed to incur odium. But on the other hand, there are certain women who are born harlots, promiscuous by nature, without the maternal instinct, gay, witty, and intelligent. For such women there should be allowance made in an intelligent and well-ordered society.

As it is, the harlot is a dull and objectionable trollop, worthy of all the contempt she receives; and since she is a portrait of the worst feature of woman-in-society, respectable women gain nothing by spitting at her because she is cheaper than they. The difference may often be merely a difference of price.

In any case, I think, personally, that the harlot is a mean, scavenging, lying, thieving, filthy and odious being; but she attracts me as an artist, in the same way that criminals and other objectionable human types attract me, to arouse that remorse of conscience which is the necessary prelude to a bout of creative energy.

I soon reached the Rua Vasco da Gama. I was pleasantly surprised to find it quite different from the brothel quarter in Dublin, which we were in the habit of visiting, crowds of us, when I was a student. In Dublin, the brothel quarter was a disgustingly sordid place, and half the men that came there used it as a shebeen purely and simply. It was a merry place, with personality and a great demonish charm, and at least one of the hostesses was almost a national figure. There

was no glitter, hardly any refinement, and a great deal of humanity and turmoil. But instead of being calculated to arouse sensual desires, unless a man was utterly drunk or foreign to the most primitive instincts of delicacy, its appearance aroused thoughts of hell and eternal damnation.

Here, by the benevolent favour of a sunny climate, the whorish quarter looked gay and voluptuous on the surface. The houses were pretty, with painted shutters on the window openings. The cobbled street surface was clean. The women, leaning out of their windows, in various stages of nudity, with extraordinary expressions on their countenances, a mixture of greed and lust, while a mixed horde of men wandered up and down outside, also in the throes of restless passion, all gave the street the appearance of a deliberately constructed tableau. For the most part, the men were of a fine physique, although shabbily dressed, being nearly all seafarers. The women were gaudily dressed, though they wore little. Some were handsome. Others were grotesque, being swollen by idleness, alcohol, and disease.

I walked along this strange market-place gloomily, blushing when, at each window, I was invited by a low hiss and a mumbled, hoarse whisper, to enter, and taste of some woman's delights. I was still very young, with the northern suspicion of soft pleasures still strong in me. Whereas I might have paid the most unseemly woman in the street for her companionship, I would not have paid the most beautiful for her body. And that is, as a general rule, the main reason why men

pursue love affairs of this sort. They are lonely, and have no other means of becoming intimate with women. The instinct that drives men to whores is often more worthy than the instinct which drives many men to the marriage altar or registry office. A good many men marry for money and other base motives. In the other case, many men pay money and run the danger of disease for the sake of feeling human, having a woman's arms about them, just as they had their mother's arms about them in infancy.

As I was walking along, an old woman caught me by the arm, and pulled me into a doorway.

'Where do you come from, sonny?' she said.

I told her. She began to stroke my hair. She had a kindly face, and a soft, friendly voice. She was an Englishwoman, about sixty years of age, but well-preserved, and in no way injured by the sort of life she had led.

'What are you doing here?' she said. 'Looking for a nice girl?'

'No,' I said. 'I'm just walking about.'

Two girls ran out into the hall, from a room on the right. One was wearing a dressing-gown and green wooden slippers. She had beautiful dark hair, that lay down her shoulders and her back.

'Here's a young man from your country, Kitty,' said the old woman.

The young girl was a little drunk. She looked at me, laughing at first, and then she threw her arms about me, and burst into tears. The old lady spoke to her severely.

'All right,' said the girl. 'Come on, boy. Come and talk to me.'

'No,' I said, resisting her. 'I really don't . . .'

She dragged me along the corridor. The other girl, a fat, unhealthy-looking woman, with dark eyes, and dyed hair, began to talk to the old woman excitedly in Portuguese. We went into the room on the right. She closed the door, and drew the curtains on the window. Then she put me sitting on the bed, and sat beside me. The room was rather shabby, but clean. I felt extremely embarrassed, largely because the girl had burst into tears, and because she was Irish and beautiful, and slightly drunk. Or was it mad?

She looked at me fiercely for half a minute without speaking. Her lips quivered. There were tears still in her eyes.

'What part of Ireland do you come from?' I said, not because I wanted to know, but just for the sake of breaking the strange trance which had taken possession of her.

I hate hysterical women.

'I come from Dublin,' she said.

That was obviously a lie. She spoke with a Liverpool accent, and was probably a native of some country place in Ireland, gone originally to Liverpool as a servant or a waitress, and then become a street woman. She was about twenty years of age.

'How long have you been out here?'

'Tell me about Ireland,' she said irrelevantly.

Her eyes wandered all over me.

'Really!' I said, 'you shouldn't have brought me in here, because I . . .'

'Listen,' she said.

She looked towards the window. Then she put her arms around my neck, looked at me intensely, and said:

'Kiss me.'

I stared at her foolishly for a moment. Then she suddenly jumped to her feet, her eyes shone, she laughed coarsely, and said:

'I'll sing you an Irish song. Listen:

'She lived beside the Anner, at the foot of Slieve na Mhan,
A gentle Irish colleen, she was fairer than the swan.

'How much money have you got? Tell me.'

She rushed over to the bed, and, breathing heavily, she tried to fondle me. She had now assumed the manner of a professional whore. Greed shone in her eyes, and her mouth was cruel.

'I have no money,' I said. 'I told you I . . .'

'Oh! Go away then,' she said harshly.

She jumped from the bed, pulled aside the curtain, and sat at the window, to entice the passers. I felt extremely embarrassed, and took two milreis from my pocket. I offered them to her. She took no notice, so I put them on the dressing-table beside her. She still took no notice.

'Good-bye,' I said. 'I hope you have good luck.'

She looked at me coldly, but said nothing. I left the room. As I went out, the old woman in the hall took

no notice of me whatsoever. I hurried away, and began to curse most violently under my breath. All this had made me feel dreadfully lonely and unhappy. I went into a little café, sat down at a table, and ordered a bottle of beer. There were two natives on a little platform making music, with a melodeon and a violin. A crowd of sailors stood about the place, drinking and talking loudly. Here, also, I saw beachcombers for the first time.

While I was drinking my beer near the doorway, two extremely ragged men came along. They halted on the pavement near my chair, and one of them spoke to me. He wore a cotton singlet without sleeves, a ragged straw hat without a crown, dungaree trousers, and wooden slippers. His young face was blotched and pimpled. His eyes were bloodshot and extremely melancholy. His companion looked healthier and better dressed, wearing a complete suit of dungarees, with a sweat rag round his throat. A rough fellow, with a stout neck and tattooed hands. The young man spoke with an American accent.

'What do you want?' I said.

'Give me a stone, for Christ's sake,' he said.

'A what?'

I did not know then that 'stone' was beachcomber's jargon for the Brazilian coin approximating in value to two English pennies.

The waiter rushed over, and threatened the beachcombers with his fist. They moved away. I finished my beer, and left the café. I followed them. A little distance away I saw them halt, and argue. Then they

separated. The fellow in the dungaree suit went off waving his arm at the American. The latter stood uncertainly, staring into the gutter, extremely abject in appearance. I came up to him and said:

'Hello, boy! Wasn't it you asked me for something just now?'

He looked at me mournfully, and said:

'Yep. I bummed you for a stone just now.'

'Well!' I said. 'You must forgive me. I didn't know what you meant. Would you like to have a drink?'

'I'd like a cigarette,' he said. 'Have you got an American cigarette?'

'I've got English tobacco and papers. Can you roll one?'

'That's fine. If you like we'll go an' have a drink at a joint I know. It's better down there than here. Are you on a ship?'

'Just left one.'

'Damn silly. It's a son of a bitch to be on the beach here. I've been here a month. Its goddam awful. Is your ship gone yet?'

'No. She just docked this morning.'

'Then get back on her. Did you have an idea of getting a job?'

'No. I have no idea at all. I'm just wandering around. I might go up country.'

'Can't do it. I've been. Unless you're an engineer. It's no good here.'

We walked along downwards towards the docks. We went through the Praga Quinze Novembre, past the ferry landing-place, up some side streets towards

the Marine Barracks. Here we met other beachcombers wandering about, each looking more deplorable than his mate. We were now in a slum quarter, where most of the people were coloured.

'My name is Foster,' said the American. 'I come from Newport, Virginia. I got a mother and two young sisters at home. They depend on me more or less. See what a mess I've made of myself. It's just like that. At home, when I used to see a bum goin' along dirty and drunk, I used never to think that he was once decent, with a nice home and people. I guess that's just how you look on me now, but maybe in a week's time you'll just begin to rot away just the same as me. It's the climate, here, see, that makes ye go quicker and sink lower. I got the wind up proper. The only thing is to get drunk and stay drunk. Then in a little while they put ye in the bughouse, and ye pass out.'

He told me he had come down here on a job for the tramway company, I think, as far as I can remember, Then he went to live with a Frenchwoman, and got into trouble. I was not interested in what he was or how he got into his present condition; for the reason that he seemed to me very romantic and a new specimen, full of colour. One is very selfish when one is not just sentimental. Surgeons take joy from mangled limbs and gaping skull wounds.

We turned into a small square, the centre of which was a wilderness of rubble and weeds, walled on one side by a row of ruined houses, and on another by a blank wall. A little to the right from where we entered, two policemen with drawn swords were lounging

outside the door of a café. When Foster saw the police, he drew back instinctively for a moment, and then went on. We entered the café. Over the door I saw written Casa do Machaco, the monkey-house. It was a queer place, rather like a London coffee bar in Soho, but the customers were much more odd than anything seen in Soho. There were a number of coloured harlots, dandified Brazilian white men, coloured workmen, beachcombers, and sailors. We sat down at a little table where there was another beachcomber sitting alone.

'This is Tramcar Reilly,' said Foster. 'Been on the beach here for years. He can tell you the ropes.'

'Two years,' said Reilly. 'You American?'

'No,' I said.

'He's a European,' said Foster.

'What? A limejuicer?'[1] said Reilly.

'Let's have that drink, buddy,' said Foster wearily. 'I've got the shivers.'

I ordered three glasses of gashasa. Then I examined Reilly with the same astonishment with which I had examined Foster. If anything, he was even more extraordinary. He was a little fellow, with very small blue eyes, a perfectly bald head, pale cheeks, and a large, furtive mouth. He wore a shabby Panama hat, a linen shirt, from which one sleeve was missing, and dirty linen trousers. His feet were bare. There were bandages on his right leg above the ankle. His hands were like those of a diver, blotched and swollen.

Reilly and Foster began to discuss their day's experience. Reilly had spent most of the morning

[1] American slang for Englishman.

begging fresh bandages for his leg at the hospital. Then he begged his dinner at a *pension*, and received very little, because they would not allow him to enter the premises for the purpose of washing dishes owing to the ulcer on his leg; for fear of contagion. His bad luck continued during the afternoon, for in three hours' street begging, he received only a penny and three cigarettes. Furthermore, a woman tried to get him put in charge, but the policeman refused to arrest him, knowing that if he got locked up the state would go to unnecessary expense treating him for his ulcer. Finally, he got struck by a docker for sneaking a glass of gashasa in a café.

Foster had better luck. He got twopence from a priest early in the morning. Then he got a milreis from a devout woman who was coming from Mass. Instead of going to a *pension* to beg his dinner, he got drunk on the money he had begged, and then slept for the rest of the day on a waste plot near the docks. Now he was feeling very badly.

I was deeply impressed by the serious manner in which they discussed their work. I asked them where they lived.

'How d'ye mean?' said Reilly. 'D'ye mean have we got rooms? No, sir. The Brazilian sky is a fine an' dandy roof. Only for this goddam leg, though, I'd be up country right now. I had a good job up there, only for the lousy nigger women. I was doing fine.'

'What were you doing?'

'Ran a gambling joint in a camp. Jesus! What a country! Regular cannibals up in the forests here, man-eating animals, all sorts. Still! Some good stuff

among those nigger bitches. I ain't sorry. Get up there again as soon as my leg gets better.'

'Listen, Reilly,' said Foster, after we had drunk three glasses each, 'you'll never leave here until ye rot. Nobody ever leaves here once he goes barefoot. A bum told me that, an' its true. Honest to God.'

He got very melancholy, and began to snigger. He was so besotted with alcohol that he got drunk immediately. Reilly, on the other hand, seemed to become tensely insane. His eyes darted about, and he kept moving restlessly. I was too nervous, so drink had no effect on me.

'No, sir,' said Reilly, 'I intend as soon as my leg gets all right, to go up country, and make another stake. I'm going to lay off this dope. When I make my little pile, I'm going right back to Chi, and get myself a saloon or a dance hall. You fellahs don't know Chi? No. Jesus! I was a goddam fool to leave that burg. Still, I'll have more sense when I get back.'

'Listen, Tramcar,' said Foster in a doleful voice. 'You know damn well every bull from Maine to Oregon is lookin' for you. How did you get that name, Tramcar? You goddam thief! I never stole nothin'. I got a good American mother in Newport. See? I'm not a lousy bum like you. I'm a sailor-man.'

I ordered some more drinks. The two of them got more and more quarrelsome, until finally Foster struck Reilly on the skull with a glass. A general fight started, because Reilly, throwing a glass at Foster, struck, by mistake, a monkey that was hopping about on a perch in a corner of the room. The monkey was the mascot

of the place, and was useful to the management for the purpose of attracting custom, as it had been taught to do various obscene tricks. A number of natives dashed in on the beachcombers, and one fellow struck at me with a chair. I avoided the blow, and answered with a kick to the stomach. The fellow lay down moaning.

Then I rushed for the door. At that moment two policemen were coming in with drawn swords, but I took them unawares, and as I dashed out between them they lost their balance, and fell against tables, one on either side. I got around the corner before anybody had time to leave the café.

I was so frightened by my experiences in this place, and so disappointed with the city, that I decided to return to the ship, so I made for the docks as fast as I could; but when I reached the quays and saw the ship in the distance, I hesitated. I began to walk up and down the quays, wondering what I should do. In the distance I could hear the braying of bugles. The city's revels were at their height.

It was nearly midnight.

CHAPTER TEN

SLEEPING OUT

Suddenly I noticed that a small man was following me up and down the deserted quays, hovering about like a dog which its master does not want. I watched him for some time with bored interest. Finally I went up to him and asked him what he wanted.

He waved his arms and said something in Spanish. I shook my head. We tried various languages without any more success. Finally he spoke in bad French, and I understood him.

'I have seen you walk about,' he said, 'and I said to myself that this man is hungry.'

'No,' I said. 'I'm not hungry.'

'No?' he said. 'Then you have nowhere to sleep for the night.'

I said nothing, not having yet decided whether I should go back to the ship or not.

'Then come with me,' he said excitedly, ' if you have no place to sleep. That's very good. I know a place. With a companion it is much safer. You have the air of an honest man. There are many murderers in Rio.'

I still hesitated. He took me by the arm, and urged me to come with him, gesticulating furiously with his

free arm, with his shoulders, and with his lips. At last I went with him. He was a tiny fellow, a young Jew, dressed miserably and not very clean; but he had a gentle expression, like a sad child. Although I am only five feet ten inches in height, I towered over him, and I could have taken him by the hand and patted him on the head and wiped his little face for him – he looked so much like a child. Quite a comical little fellow. He moved in little rushes, talking all the time, asking me questions.

I told him that I was not really a seaman as he supposed, but that I had set out from London to wander round the world, and having no money to pay my way as a tourist, I had undertaken to work on ships for my transport and maintenance. I had left my ship at Rio with the intention of wandering into the interior of Brazil. I told him all sorts of astonishing lies, just as one would tell a child. When I had finished he halted, and looked at me in a terrified fashion, thinking, no doubt, that I was a madman. He seemed on the point of going away, but he smiled suddenly, extended his arms, and cried:

'Ah! You are an Englishman. I see.'

'Indeed!' I said.

'Yes,' he said. 'Now we go to find sleeping-place.'

Again he dragged me along, apparently reassured. He pointed to a row of railway wagons that were parked on a siding to the rear of the docks in a quiet place.

'Here,' he said. 'We sleep here. I have already got our beds.'

He looked all round cautiously as if he were going to burgle a house, and then jumped on to the floor of a wagon. He beckoned to me, and I followed him. The wagon was fairly clean, and quite empty except for a bundle of newspapers in a corner. I saw no sign of a bed.

'Where are the beds?' I asked.

'There,' he said, pointing to the newspapers. 'Like this. Spread one beneath. Then lie down. Then cover head and hands with another.'

'Funny sort of a bed,' I thought, frowning.

I had become unaccustomed to this sort of discomfort, and in any case, while one feels, in a certain sense, that one is doing something meritorious, and that the public approves of one's sleeping out during war on active service, in civilian life, when one sleeps out, one has no such feeling of heroism, because the public disapproves of people who are not respectable men of property and regular habits. Half the discomfort of sleeping out is caused by the disgrace of it. Now I should feel utterly indifferent to disgrace of any sort, but at that time I had still some feelings of snobbery.

The Jew saw me frown, and said:

'This is very good. Near the sea, few mosquitoes. Too hot for clothes. Foolish to spend money in a hotel.'

I looked at him suspiciously when he mentioned the word money. I still had ten milreis. Supposing he had decoyed me to this place in order to rob me while I was asleep; or indeed, after robbing me, treated himself to the pleasure of cutting my throat? I could

just imagine the pleasure a little runt like him would derive from cutting the throat of a comparative giant like myself.

'I have no money,' I said angrily. 'Do you think I'd sleep here if I had?'

'All right,' he said excitedly. 'All right. Don't be afraid. I have money. Very little. Five milreis. I'll buy breakfast in the morning. Plenty food. Pineapple for you and me. Then eggs for you, with bread and butter and coffee. Then, maybe, you come with me. You are a big man. Robbers afraid of you.'

I didn't know what to make of him. He spread out a copy of *O Paz*, and told me to lie on it. I lay down. He spread another sheet over me, and gave me a third to put over my head when I went to sleep. Then he made down his own bed nearby. He offered me a cigarette. We began to smoke.

'I am a Jew,' he said.

'Yes,' he continued. 'I was born in Italy, but now I am a citizen of the Argentine Republic. I am a merchant by trade.'

'A merchant?'

'Yes. Now I have no pack but to-morrow, perhaps, I'll get a pack. I have no money, but some kind friend, perhaps, will give me a pack on credit. All men are brothers.'

He took some money from his pocket and showed it to me.

'See?' he said. 'I have only five milreis, but it is enough. We'll eat a lot of food in the morning. Then perhaps you come with me.'

I got very bored with him. Very small men are always boring. They either chatter incessantly and are very insolent, or else they are pathetic and clinging. I lay down and began to think.

After a while the little Jew continued:

'In Buenos Ayres I married a woman, and she ran away with a malefactor and took my money. I followed her, but her man beat me with a whip. I got afraid and sold my goods. Then I paid the captain of a sailing ship to bring me here. The sailors robbed me in Santos. I am still young, and the blood of young men is hot, and my wife had run away with a malefactor, so I went to a whore-house and got drunk. Then they robbed me while I was lying drunk in the whore-house. Now I have only five milreis. But to-morrow we eat.'

I began to feel drowsy, and threw away the butt of my cigarette through the open door of the wagon. I covered my head with the newspapers. A few mosquitoes were buzzing about.

'All men are brothers,' said the Jew, 'and they should help one another, but malefactors are many.'

'Shut up and let's sleep.'

'As you please,' he said.

I fell asleep, but, being unused to mosquitoes, I awoke almost at once. Waking suddenly after a very short sleep, in the early part of the night, has on me an extraordinary psychological effect. The activity of my brain is intensified to a degree bordering on insanity, but in no way related to the common sort of hysteria. My power of comprehension becomes much greater than normal, but gives me pain instead of

pleasant exaltation, as the images vanish before I have time to control them, and force them into my memory cells. If I am working on some problem or form of activity, which occupies my thoughts during the day, my mind labours on that particular thing with marked success; but when my mind is fallow, it concerns itself at those moments with monstrous hypotheses.

On that night I conceived with astonishing vividness the idea that a physical God existed in reality. He was situated in some vague position in the firmament, on a sort of platform, from which point of vantage he held the whole universe under observation. He had human shape from the head downwards, but the head, while being one, had the observing properties of three heads. It had three pairs of eyes, three mouths, three noses, but no ears, except a structure like a mushroom, protruding from the top of the skull. The brain was single. Everything that happened in the whole universe, not only on the earth, but on every other planet and fixed star, was known to this being, but he exerted no control over universal activity, simply adopting the attitude of a spectator at a public entertainment, laughing immoderately, and through his omniscience amusing himself by pointing out, to himself, the mistakes and stupidities of the actors. He was much more terrifying than if he had a proper sense of good and evil, and I was very indignant at his mockery of the human intellect, which, according to him, was extremely puerile.

While I was busy with this odd contemplation, I heard a noise outside the wagon. Staggering footsteps

approached and I heard a voice cursing in Spanish. I looked towards the Jew. He was fast asleep. I sighed, and said to myself:

'This is going to be very humiliating. The Jew is going to see them take my ten milreis after I have told him that I have no money. And then I'm going to have no breakfast on top of that.'

I covered my head, and pretended to be asleep. There seemed to be several of them by the noise they made, and I'd have a better chance of escaping with my life if I let them ransack me with impunity. Presently one of them climbed into the wagon. I heard the Jew breathe loudly. He put out his little arm and tugged at me, obviously begging me to arise and defend him. That was why he had brought me here, obviously, in order that I might defend him from robbers. But I shrugged myself, snored, and went on pretending to be asleep. Another man climbed into the wagon. The first man struck a match, and swore.

'He sounds like a murderer,' I thought. 'I'll have to fight for it.'

But I went on pretending to be asleep. The two men staggered about, lighting matches, and cursing in Spanish. I could not understand a word they said, and that made them still more terrifying. They first went to the Jew, and apparently seized him, because I heard him chatter, begging for mercy. I still pretended to be asleep, and even stopped breathing, in the hope that they might think me a corpse, remembering that if one lies still when attacked by a bull one is supposed to be safe.

I heard the Jew trying to scream, making a gurgling sound as if he were being strangled.

'He's done for,' I thought. 'Now, I'll have to fight for it.'

But I went on pretending to be asleep or dead. The little Jew had chosen a miserable wretch for a body-guard. I heard what I thought was the Jew's dead carcass hurled into a corner, and at once my thoughts reverted to the idea that, if the human race recognised that God was such as I had seen him, the tremendous amount of human energy that is now expended on the worship of God could be used to improve the condition of the human intellect, which God treats with contempt. Very probably, a concerted effort by the whole human race would solve the secret of immortality. But what was the use of that? It would be too late as far as I was concerned. Already the Spaniards approached.

They pulled *O Paz* from my face, handled me, swearing, seized my jaws, prised them open and stuck – the nozzle of a bottle into my mouth. They poured native whisky down my throat. Gasping, I sat up and opened my eyes. Then I saw, by the light of a match that one man held, two Spanish sailors as drunk as stone-masons. They were great fellows. I reached out for the bottle, and had a good swig to pull myself together after the fright I had received. Then we discovered a common jargon, composed of several languages, and we began to talk. I told them airily that I had been sound asleep until the bottle touched my teeth, and that I was just going to seize my knife when I tasted the whisky.

They in turn explained that they had meant no harm to the little Jew, but had got offended with him because he refused to drink. So we calmed the Jew, and finished the bottle between us, and then went to sleep. Next morning the four of us had breakfast on the Jew's five milreis.

The Jew was still suspicious of the Spaniards. When they left us after breakfast in order to return to their ship, he said to me:

'They are two malefactors but they feared your great size and strength. Now I tell you something. I know you are honest and that you fear nothing but God.'

'Eh!' I said. 'How do you know what I saw last night?'

'You say?'

'Nothing,' I said. 'You're a damn fool.'

'No,' said the Jew, shaking his head violently. 'I'm no fool. You come with me. I now give you twenty milreis for saving my life from two malefactors. Here,' he touched the seat of his trousers, 'I have hidden one thousand milreis. I buy goods, and we go together in business. You protect me, and do business with people of your own country. I think, and am wise, and count and take care everything is correct.'

I stared at him, amazed at the little devil's cunning. Yet he was so simple, and so like a child.

'What do you sell?' I said.

He whispered in my ear.

'Get out of it,' I cried, 'you dirty little swine. What do you take me for?'

He was astonished at my indignation, and indeed his astonishment was natural enough; for, really, there is no great difference between selling socks, which protect the feet from cold, and selling other garments, which protect intimate parts of the body from disease, and poor people from the burden of large families.

I left him, and wandered up into the city away from the docks. I had finally decided not to return to the ship. In the morning the air was extremely fresh and kindly, and I again became enthused by the beauty of the city, so that I wanted very much to stay there. For that reason I asked for work in various places, but was nowhere successful. Then I began to get bored. It grew hotter as the day went on, and accordingly my enthusiasm diminished, so I turned back to the docks and went to sleep on a grassy place overlooking the harbour. I was awakened some time in the late afternoon by hearing loud sounds of merriment nearby. On sitting up, I saw an amazing sight.

About eight beachcombers had collected, and they were having an open-air debauch of drunkenness. Foster, whom I had met the previous evening, was there with a soiled bandage about his head. The others I had not seen before, but they were, if anything, in a more degraded condition than Foster. Never in all my life have I seen anything so bestial as those eight men tumbling about on the grass, helplessly drunk. Barefooted, ragged, wearing hats without crowns, shirts without sleeves, tattered coats and patched trousers, their faces and hands and limbs disfigured by unclean diseases, jabbering like idiots, laughing, weeping,

singing, they were more terrifying than the distorted vision of God which I had seen on the previous night. It was especially disgusting to think that they were Europeans, and to see a crowd of Brazilians watching them with amusement from a distance.

This sight cured me of the belief that there was any romance to be found in Brazil, at least as far as I was concerned. I began to long for the icy winds of the north, for mud, slush, fog, frost, snow, thundering seas, and the stern strength of northern men. Perhaps I was really terrified by the sub-conscious thought that I myself, if I stayed there, might become a ragged, diseased, and drunken beachcomber, the laughing-stock of pigmy, yellow-hided Brazilians.

I stole away from there, determined to avoid that quarter lest I might become contaminated. And yet I was determined not to return to the ship. I wandered up to the city once more. Now I fell into a state of pleasant melancholy, and found great solace in my miserable condition. After nightfall, I went to the beautiful Parc Real, and sat on a bench. There I spent a wonderful night, thinking. I sat so still that a policeman approached me several times to see was I asleep. For some reason or other, people are not allowed to sleep in public at night. But I was not asleep.

All that night I meditated on Jesus Christ, trying to come to some definite conclusion about Him, comparing Him with divers other men, who became famous in different capacities. The subject offered a delightful opportunity for vague and pleasant rumination

on the most different ideas. I began by trying to find out the real reason why I myself, in my present condition, was in no way Christlike, even though I was penniless, a vagrant, and without useful ambition in the economic sense. I had the same complex about the uselessness of human effort, and the same tendency towards 'star-gazing,' or the attempt to establish harmony in something beyond the bounds of terrestrial reality. Possibly it was in a difference of temperament that we were different. He was gentle like the little Jew with whom I slept the previous night, and that little Jew appealed to me because he was gentle and kind-hearted, and he still appealed to me, and I still thought he was a more lovable type of human being than I myself, even though his lack of delicacy allowed him to live by selling what he did sell.

In the same way, the gentleness of Christ appealed to arrogant and proud northern people, even though the sense of reality prevalent among northern peoples would never allow them to tolerate among people of their own kind the unbridled vanity of Jesus, who thought himself divine.

And yet Christ was essentially beautiful in his gentleness, like a soft phrase from a great poet, and therefore God, because he was perfect in one particular form, since one can only conceive God as the perfection of some quality, inherent in one's nature, but in an imperfect state.

Then I had an imaginary journey into the heart of Brazil, assuming a pose of gentleness that endeared me to the savage natives, so that they came to regard

me as their god. But when I had converted them to this belief, and found myself head of a vast horde, I chose to become a god of a different type, assuming the quality of Genghiz Khan, Julius Cæsar, Alexander, Napoleon Bonaparte, men whose virtue lay in their brutality, courage, endurance, greed, and intelligence. In that manner I could conquer Brazil.

The idea attracted me so much that I determined to wander into the interior next morning. But why wait?

At about four o'clock in the morning I set out, with the immediate object of wandering through Brazil, and with the ultimate purpose, rather vague, of conquering Brazil and becoming God.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AN EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION

I HAD no map, and I consulted nobody. I did not even know the shortest way out of the city. I just turned my back to the sea and began to walk. At first walking was pleasant, and I was so exhilarated by the incredible insanity of my undertaking that I felt no fatigue after three hours' continuous marching. Then I had some coffee and rolls at a small café, smoked for half an hour, and continued my journey. I walked for another two hours and reached the outskirts of the suburbs. Open country lay beyond. I sat down by the roadside, cocked my head to one side, and whispered to myself:

'Now, look here, my boy. Before you go any farther, what's the idea behind this ridiculous journey?'

The exercise had done me a great deal of good, and restored my common sense. It also brought to the surface my strongest physical characteristic, that of laziness. So I immediately wanted to go back. And yet the thought of going back horrified me. It is always unpleasant to go back to any place one has left for good.

Just then I remembered a lying fellow who had been to school with me, and whom I afterwards met by chance in the army. In the meantime he had returned to his

people in the Argentine, and had joined the Australian Light Horse at the outbreak of war. He had been wounded at the Dardanelles and discharged. Then he managed to get into the Guards as a private. We used to knock about together at Caterham. He told me that he brought a herd of horses from Uruguay to Mexico, and sold them to General Villa. He had brought them right across country, and encountered marvellous experiences on the way. As I never question the truth of a lie if it is sufficiently interesting, I had come to believe the story just as one believes in the reality of Macbeth or Panurge. Therefore, I grew determined to do what C. did, since I considered myself as good a man as he. The obvious thing to do was to get a horse. But where on earth could I get a horse in this damn country?

I jumped up and walked on. Presently I came to a large house. It looked like the residence of a country gentleman, and was laid out on the European plan, with a demesne and garden and woods.

'It's more than likely,' I thought, 'that this chap keeps a stable. I might first of all get a job here, and work a couple of months, and take a hack for my wages. Or I might be able to sneak off with a horse. Indeed, the man might have a sense of humour, and give me a horse when I tell him what I'm going to do.'

So I entered at the gate, and walked up the drive. Then I began to lose confidence, as I could not make head or tail of the place. There were numbers of buildings lying about a large square. I saw a football field with goal-posts, and a large cook-house, capable of

cooking food for hundreds of people. A gang of workmen were lounging about the door of the cook-house, talking at a great rate, and making gestures, according to the fashion of the country. When these individuals saw me coming they all gaped at me. I grew very embarrassed, and did not know what to do, but I continued to advance. I could not possibly ask these ridiculous Brazilians for a horse. Finally I came to a halt in the square near the cook-house, got very angry, and shouted at the workmen:

'Who owns this place?'

Nobody answered me, as nobody understood English but they gathered round me like small boys round a circus clown. Then one fellow ran across the square, and the others made signs to me that something of interest was about to happen. I waited, very red in the face, wishing I were outside the gate once more.

Presently the messenger returned, followed by a man in a white linen suit and Panama hat. The latter saluted me in English. I was delighted, recognising him as an Irishman by his accent.

'You are Irish?'

'Yes. And you?'

'Yes. What part?'

'Belfast. And you?'

Meeting a fellow-countryman thousands of miles from home is like inheriting an unexpected fortune. What was more, we discovered that we had been at college together. He had been a medical student, but had run away to sea, for private reasons, in his second year, had skipped his ship at Rio just as I had done,

and had got a job here. The place was not a gentleman's country house, but a large school. He was teaching French.

'Oh!' I said. 'You're good at French.'

He shook his head.

'That doesn't count. I learned it since I came here. There are lots of French boys here. In any case natives do most of the work. In this country, if you are European, you just swing the lead and draw your salary. Where were you off to? Looking for a job?'

'Not exactly,' I said.

Then I told him, rather vaguely, what had been in my mind.

'Oh!' he said, a little diffidently. 'You've been in the war, have you?'

'Yes. Why?'

'Got hit in the head?'

'Why?'

He did not answer for a moment. Then he told the crowd to disperse, rather angrily. They trotted off, talking loudly, and still examining me with interest. I saw him look at my linen, and felt ashamed because it was anything but in good condition.

'The whole point is,' he said, 'that a man has got to maintain the dignity of a European here. If you let yourself get shabby you're ruined. But let's see. Come along.'

I followed him. I could see that he suspected me of having become a social outcast, and that he was a trifle sorry for having admitted in conversation that I had once been on a footing of social equality with

him. Personally, I must admit, I was a trifle embarrassed by my position. It is extraordinary how middle-class conventions of respectability become engrained in one.

'I think I can fix you up with some kit,' he said. 'And . . . I don't see why Mr. A. couldn't make some sort of job for you here. You were clever at school, weren't you? What were your special subjects?'

'Classics.'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'Not much good here,' he said.

I wanted to get out of the place, as I had no intention of taking a job at teaching, even if it were offered to me on bended knees. I loathe the atmosphere of schoolrooms, and I'd rather dig drains than be a schoolmaster, but I did not want to leave this chap after meeting him. Still, I was loath to place him in an embarrassing situation. My appearance would undoubtedly lower his standing among the natives.

It is this consideration for the feelings of others that gives continued life to the most ridiculous superstitions of respectability. How many people go to church lest they might hurt their parents by staying away? Or, at the other pole, how many young fellows drink beer lest they might be thought unmanly by their comrades? The world would be much more comfortable if everybody had the courage to do as he pleased, provided he did not materially injure his neighbours. Alas! I am not courageous that way. It hurts me to hurt people, and for that reason I am being continually used by helpless people and brought into difficult situations

through my weakness, out of which I emerge, branded as a cold and callous scoundrel.

He dressed me up in one of his white linen suits, and then brought me to see the president of the school, another Irishman, a very severe and puritanical gentleman, with the manners of a schoolmaster, but at the same time a kindly fellow. He asked me for my army papers and, when he had inspected them, became more friendly. I thought it very amusing that these two men, both of military age, living thousands of miles from the scene of war, in which they had taken no part, should be so punctilious about my part in the affair; whereas I myself, having taken part in the war through an idiotic passion for adventure, hated the very thought of the business and regarded all men who had volunteered for service as courageous fools. It is always the wise fellow who pats the hero on the back, like a man urging on a dog to a fight and then buying him a biscuit when he has won.

Mr. A., the president, decided to give me a job. He said the students were away on holiday at the moment, and there was no work to be done. In the meantime, I could learn the language, and become acclimatised. He hoped I would not suffer from home-sickness. They gave me a room, and introduced me to a Portuguese servant who was to help me with the language.

I felt very miserable. My friend, Mr. Mc., left me to go into town. I could see that he did not want us to be intimate here, considering the fact that I was wearing his clothes and had entered the place as a

tramp, more or less; even though, in reality, I had called there for a horse in order to travel to Mexico. Nobody believes these things nowadays.

After lunch I met an Englishman who looked after the farm. He was the most human person there. He was a fat man of about thirty-five years of age, a mild, well-bred person, whom I suspect of having left his country under a slight cloud of some sort. He was obviously very home-sick. He took me aside, and asked me the eternal question. Had I been to the war?

'Listen,' I said. 'Please understand that I don't want to hear anything about the war. I love horse-racing, football, billiards, beer, books, and politics. I am quite prepared to talk about any of them, but I have no more interest in the late war than I have in the exact number of animals that entered the ark.'

'So sorry,' he said mildly. 'But for my own part I feel a little sensitive on that point. You see, I didn't volunteer . . . er . . . there were certain reasons. Of course, there was a question of expense. At the time I wasn't very flush. My people have been hard hit. Still, I am a naturalised citizen of Brazil. Now, for instance, if Brazil went to war with the Argentine, I'd enlist at once.'

'You'd be a damn fool,' I said.

'You think so?' he said with dignity. 'I think it's every man's duty to fight for his country, whatever it may be. This is mine by adoption.'

The utter idiocy of it! Fancy an Englishman looking on Brazil as his mother country and bringing his

public school morality to its assistance! He might as well try to quench a fire with a bucket of petrol.

Dealing with realities, the man was very charming. He brought me around the farm, which was under his care. In that capacity, as a farmer, he was doing more for Brazil, to civilise the place and teach the inhabitants the virtues of good citizenship and the art of agriculture, than he could possibly do by fighting for it; yet he told me that it was soul-killing work. He wanted to do something else. What? Had I any interest in literature? To my amazement he told me that he had written three novels. Some day he had hopes of getting them published. Then he sighed, and we moved on.

When we had gone a little way he halted, and said:

'Very often I picture Kipling wandering around the bazaars in India, unknown, utterly unknown. Everything is possible.'

I carefully avoided him for the rest of the time I remained in the place, lest he might rush at me with his manuscripts.

It was very dull. I disliked the continual rice and beans, coffee, rolls, eggs. I disliked my room, which had a mosquito curtain instead of a window. I liked the birds and the trees. They were both so beautiful. I liked the Spanish wife of the gardener, a voluptuous, but rather fat woman. I tried to have an affair with her without success. But I felt lonely. The two Irishmen left me alone, and I could feel they disapproved of me, and I had to avoid the Englishman because of his manuscripts.

Having nothing to do, I spent most of the day

lounging on a rock in the centre of a torrent that flowed down from the mountainy country above the house. It was extremely beautiful there, sheltered from the excessive tropical heat by the gorgeous trees, with the delightful colours of the foliage and of the rocks, and the music of the tumbling water soothing the mind by enforcing it to worship the beauty of nature. It is strange that no matter where one goes over all the surface of the earth, seeking splendid views, one never finds anything more wonderful than one could find in one's own village. For everywhere running water and sunshine and the growth of plants and the singing of birds have the same joyous beauty. There is merely the difference that lies between one painter's or one poet's conception of beauty and another's. A difference of colour, form, or rhythm.

One day, while I was lying on this rock dozing in the sun, I got a bad fright. I had taken off my coat, shirt, and shoes, and was lying on my back, when I was awakened by a fly that settled on my nose, and refused to be dislodged by the instinctive shaking of my head. Yawning, I looked to the left bank of the stream. There, on a patch of sunny moss, I saw an enormous snake curled in sleep. I became paralysed with fright. It was the first time I had seen a large snake in its natural freedom, and I had been hearing at the school how venomous these reptiles were, causing a number of deaths among animals, and infecting even some of the students and workmen with their poison. I remained perfectly still, without drawing breath, looking at it. It was very beautiful, but at that moment

its beauty looked evil, being possessed of a power that was much greater than mine. Then I drew in my breath with a great gasp, and the snake became aware of my presence. It raised its head and looked at me. I stared at it open-mouthed. We remained in that position for nearly a minute, each terrified by the other. Then the snake slid into the bush. Sweat was oozing from my pores. I was hardly able to put on my clothes and walk away. But after going a little distance I suddenly recovered my strength and ran with all my speed until I came to the school grounds.

In the evenings I used to go for walks with the Portuguese servant. He was very small, and had to run alongside me to keep pace. But he had a very good method of teaching me the language. He was so gentle and kind, and eager to oblige, that I learned from him quickly. In about a week I could converse with him. In fact, before I felt Brazil a fortnight later, I could speak the language quite well. But I forgot it as quickly as I learned it. Now I could not use three phrases in Portuguese. One drops useless information, unless one is a bore, like those old soldiers who have been in India or Africa and persecute their acquaintances with anecdotes told in a mixture of native dialects with a few English words thrown in.

One night, when I had been in the place ten days, a thunderstorm came. It was a shocking affair, very like a heavy barrage, and it kept me awake all night. I had most unpleasant thoughts. It occurred to me that I was a very shabby fellow, wandering about like this, without letting my parents and relatives know

whether I was dead or alive. I grew homesick. What was happening in Europe? Was there a general revolution consequent on the war? I grew excited, and decided to return at once.

Next morning I left the school without bidding anybody good-bye. I would have had to offer some sort of explanation, and that would have been embarrassing. It was bad enough to arrive at the place looking for a horse to ride to Mexico. It would be still worse to say that I was leaving in order to watch the revolution in Europe. So I stole out quietly, the richer by a linen suit and several hundred words in the Portuguese language.

I arrived in the city about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, bought a newspaper, took a chair at a café table on the Avenida Rio Branco, and ordered a bottle of beer. It was a glorious day after the storm. Fashionably dressed men and women were passing up and down, with the slow, dignified carriage of people in tropical countries. It was very pleasant watching them, while I sipped my beer through a straw. I felt very elated. Then I opened the newspaper and was amazed to read in great red headlines *Republica Declarata na Irlanda*. Astonishing news! So my meditations of the night before had been prophetic. I threw away the straw, swallowed the remainder of the beer, and went to the Consul's office.

He was very cross, and soundly rated me for having deserted my ship. He told me to report at the Seamen's Mission, and wait there for a ship.

'You'll pay for this when you get back,' he said.

I could not understand the serious view he took of the miserably trivial affair in face of the exciting public calamities, excursions, and tumults that were afoot at home. I went to the Seamen's Mission, and reported to the gentleman in charge. He also rated me soundly, told me where to sleep, and arranged for my meals. Then I sat down to wait for a ship. My own ship had left the port a week previously, bound for Buenos Ayres.

On the third day I was told to report on board a ship that was bound for Liverpool. I secured a berth as a trimmer. One of the stokehold crew had gone to hospital. The chief engineer was a native of Belfast, a very sour individual, of enormous girth, with the manners of a constipated gorilla. He made a point of having an interview with me, apparently for the purpose of telling me that he suspected I was going back 'to fight for the Irish rebels.' I told him with extreme politeness that I was in no way connected with his family or race.

'What race do ye mean?' he cried angrily.

'The Pithecanthropus Erectus,' I answered.

'None o' yer bloody guff,' he cried, blushing. 'Don't try any o' yer Gaelic on me. An' what's more, I want no sedition among the crew on board this ship. D'ye see?'

'You are quite mistaken,' I said. 'I frankly admit that there are numbers of people all over Ireland who appear to belong to that class, but I am proud to say that my family, even my most remote ancestors, had never any relationships with them.'

'What class d'ye mean?' he said furiously.

'The Pithecanthropus Erectus,' I said with a bow.

He stared for a few moments at me, his florid face and swollen stomach writhing with stupid anger. Then, with an oath, he told me to clear out of his sight, and get into dungarees. Several times during the voyage he tried to force me into insolence that he could understand, so that he could get me crimed; but without success.

There was a black crew in the stokehold, so I shared a two-bunked cabin with a Russian Pole. My memory of that voyage is so dim that I forget whether he was a greaser or a fireman. My impression is that he was a fireman, and that I trimmed for his watch. He was a charming fellow, and was very kind to me. The sailors were also a decent lot of men. Of course, as the other firemen and trimmers were black, the Russian and myself did not mix with them.

I can never understand the point of view of those who make a fetish of insisting that all men are equal: and, as a necessary consequence, that it is snobbery to avoid the society of certain individuals and classes, because these latter are inferior to oneself in person, in manners, or in intelligence. In my opinion, that is sheer nonsense, and a pernicious and false prejudice. Dostoievsky said that when a man becomes imbued with an altruistic love, in theory, for the human race, it is a sure sign that he has become an utter scoundrel, a false and selfish ruffian in his relations with those individuals who are nearly connected with him, and to

whom he owes certain obligations. So with all theoretical equalitarians. Personally, like most decent people, I think myself infinitely superior to most and equal to the best of the human race. The rest I tolerate in so far as they amuse me, are of use to me, or through necessity. And this is the natural attitude. I remember how natives of my island, a very clean, sober and thrifty, courageous and industrious race, despised the natives of the local mainland, because the latter were dirty of person, lecherous, idle, drunken and unreliable.

For the same reason the white seamen on board the *K–* would not associate with the black stokers. For that reason also, the Russian and myself, although by right we should have lived in the firemen's fo'c'sle, had a room to ourselves.

The negroes kept their fo'c'sle in a shocking state of filth. When I had to enter it in order to call the watch, I invariably had to keep a lighted cigarette in my mouth, and breathe as little as possible. They were completely bestial in their habits, being addicted to vices which are generally supposed by moralists to exist only among highly civilised and decadent societies. They were for ever quarrelling. One day we were startled on hearing terrible cries issuing from their fo'c'sle, as if a horde of wild animals were therein engaged on a mutual massacre. When we forced our way in, armed with what weapons we could seize, we found the place running blood, and several of the negroes lying on the floor, gashed by razor cuts. The rest, retiring to their bunks on our approach, looked at

us in terror, silent, breathing in gusts, their wild eyes lit with the hysterical brutality of savages.

So ended my first expedition into the tropics, in disillusion and without any credit to myself; unless I could count among my gains the renewal of my faith in the superiority of European man.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I GO EAST

It now seems to me extraordinary that, although I left Brazil with the direct intention of seeing the revolution in Ireland, I had lost all interest in that affair by the time of my arrival in England. But it is a fact that most affairs are more interesting at a distance than at close quarters. Nowadays, especially, it is the business of newspapers to clothe trivial affairs in the cloak of romance. I remember how exciting it was to read a thrilling newspaper report of a dull engagement in which I had taken part in France; an affair which left only one distinct memory in my mind, the fact that we were given a ration of one cold potato and half a mess tin of coldish tea on coming out of the line. In the same way, I imagine that Leonidas must have felt bored at Thermopylæ and died grousing about the quality of the local wine. Bucephalus, very probably, would not have won a selling plate against moderate opposition. And when Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, the centurions who witnessed that historic event were solely concerned with paltry questions, such as the state of their men's uniforms, rations, and routine orders for the crossing.

The historian and the literary artist, by discarding whatever is dull, by caging the events of years within the compass of a small book, which can be read in a few hours, and by enabling one individual to see with the eyes and feel with the passions of a multitude, create romance from the life of society. An individual can only create romance from his own personal life, and the less it is connected with society the more that life is capable of creating romance.

When I arrived in Liverpool, I could find no trace of the Irish revolution, for the reason that more important matters occupied my attention.

The crew was paid off on board the evening of our arrival, but I experienced difficulty in getting paid, as I had deserted my last ship at Rio. I had to wait until the following day, in order to get a note from my former employers to the effect that I owed them no money. This irritated me. I went ashore with my Russian friend, on a horribly cold night in January, wearing a thin linen suit, which was intended rather to keep out the heat than to maintain heat in the body. We did the usual thing when we reached a public-house, and I caused considerable surprise by my apparel. The proprietress was an Irishwoman, and I asked her whether a republic had really been set up in Ireland. She looked at me in surprise. I told her that I had read in a Brazilian newspaper that Ireland had declared for a republic.

'Well,' she said. 'It's like this, sonny. I can declare for the ownership of the Liver Building, but that doesn't mean to say that it's going to be handed

to me in a registered envelope in the morning, does it?'

I made no further inquiries. It was extremely cold, and Liverpool is a city capable, by its ugliness, of reducing all human enthusiasm to mud and fog, its chief material constituents.

Next day I got paid, exchanged my linen suit for a suit of shabby serge, bought some other clothes, and went to Cardiff with my Russian friend.

I don't know what impressions Cardiff would make on me now, but at that time I found it an astonishing place, rather more interesting than other provincial towns. Being small, its motley population of sailors from all quarters of the world gave it an extremely foreign air; and as seafarers are always loafers when ashore, there was a great bustle of life along the Bute Road and the whole dock district. It was pleasant to loll around for a few days, after the labour and the heat of the stokehold. Then it grew very boring. I could not attune myself to the life of the public-house and the coffee-house, endless beer, and stupid conversation, intermingled with dreary and rather bestial love affairs. Such is the sailor's life ashore.

There was, however, one definite psychological result of my stay in Cardiff. I assumed the consciousness of a seafarer and of a working man. This is difficult to explain to anyone who has never worked for wages, and lived among the proletariat on terms of social equality. It would be equally difficult to explain to one who belonged to the proletariat by birth and breeding. This particular attitude towards life is a mixture of

pride and shame. The individual consciousness is largely submerged in a mass consciousness, and there is also a terrible feeling of inevitable poverty, inevitable slavery, somewhat similar, I feel, to the dull terror of a criminal when he meditates on his life sentence. The continued existence of forms of slavery is due to this stupid terror, which is engendered in the mass consciousness of slaves and drags down the bravest individuals to the level of cowardice of the most cowardly in the mass. When a brave individual struggles to break free from this slave consciousness, the effort, as a rule, embitters him, making him savage, argumentative, and jealous of all forms of culture and refinement which had been alien to his upbringing. That is the ugly side of working-class consciousness. The beautiful side, fortunately, counteracts it, giving that peace in comradeship which makes wage slavery endurable.

After mature consideration, I state quite honestly that if I were given a choice of spending my life as a wage-worker or in jail, I would choose the latter sentence.

When I had remained three weeks in Cardiff and my money was spent, even though I was careful with it, as a result of my Russian friend's advice, I managed to sign on a ship bound for the Mediterranean. I joined in the capacity of a deck-boy. The wages were practically *nil*, but that did not trouble me. I had enough sense to know that a sailor's wages are of no use to him, since he spends his money without getting any return, at least, no return of interest to an intelligent human being. I just wanted to move about the earth.

It was immaterial whether I was a deck-boy or a trimmer since I was determined to desert the ship as soon as I got to an interesting country.

The ship was much smaller than the previous ones, and she was also much more pleasant. There was a feeling of friendliness among the whole crew which became manifest as soon as I boarded her with my kitbag. In fact, I cannot recall any period of my life which gives me more pleasure than the time I spent on that tramp steamer.

We put to sea on a cold morning in February. There was a heavy rain, but everybody was so gay that the work of hauling at sodden ropes, although they blistered the hands, was not at all unpleasant. There was a great commotion, which was very exciting, and I was especially entertained by the captain, who stood on his bridge howling out orders, using all those nautical expressions which enthral schoolboys and timid city men, and obtain a great sale for Marryat, Conrad, and other romantic writers. It was quite different from the stokehold, which had the efficient air of a factory, with machines, heat, terrific labour, and inexorable routine. Here on deck, it seemed that one played at being a seafarer of the old school, now practically defunct and useless, throwing about ropes and such things, while the unfortunate stokers were seeing to the real business of getting the ship to her destination.

The attitude of a deck hand towards a ship is curiously different from that of a stokehold hand. When I worked in the stokehold I regarded the ship as an enemy, a jail in which I was forced to do hard labour.

I could never comprehend the ship as something outside myself. On deck, in common with the other deck-hands, I took joy in the ship, and regarded her as a thing of beauty, although she was an unseemly old cargo tramp. Her movement through the water gave me pleasure, and she became a living thing, like a horse, which I rode, swaying with her motion. Her spars and all her harness were also interesting, and her prow that cut the waves and jumped, shuddering, when it struck a powerful current of the sea, gave me the impression that I was mounted on a gallant horse. I had the feeling of being carried on a journey, instead of, as previously, being the tool to effect other people's carriage. I had a sense of being important, although I was practically of no importance whatsoever, in so far as the advance of the ship was concerned. And the individuals on deck with me, from the captain to the apprentices, were also people of importance, of a definite respectability, compared with the despicable stokers who did all the real work and were always black, weary, and stiff in their gait.

As individuals, certainly, these deck hands were much more interesting than any stokehold hands I had met. The captain was especially interesting. He was a burly, simple-minded Scotchman, jovial, bibulous, and as fruitful of bad language as a drill sergeant. Everybody on the ship loved him, and nobody paid any attention to his oaths and threats, which, to a stranger or an effeminate individual, would make him appear to be an outrageous and sadistic tyrant. He roused the ship every morning by marching up and

down his bridge, cursing and singing *Annie Laurie*, and yelling at the men for'ard.

'Hey, you limping bastards, looking for thick heads, are you? Pile on to it, you . . . or I'll hang for murder. "For my bonnie Annie . . ." Look at that damn Swede.'

His junior officers were all English, very quiet and decent fellows, but of no great interest. The seamen were all astonishing.

Chief among them was a Londoner called Watts, known as Cock. He was an old sailor about fifty years of age. He had been to sea since he was fourteen. A fat, thick-set fellow, with a pale face and merry eyes, of a remarkable wit and subtlety, he was the centre of life in the fo'c'sle. During the dog-watch, when we were all gathered together, except the man at the wheel, Cock took up his position on the deck in front of the bogey, and recited the adventures of his life. Gesticulating with the extended forefinger of his right hand, and embroidering his narrative with wonderfully obscene oaths, he told us about ancient sailing ships, love affairs, fights, and brothels in obscure corners of the world.

A taciturn, pock-marked Swede was always Cock's partner in these narratives. They were of the same age, and had been practically the same time at sea, mostly on sailing vessels; but they were of entirely different characters. Cock had all the genial carelessness and romantic disregard for truth of an English working-class adventurer; the Swede, even while taking part in these conversations, was always working, stitching his

clothes, sharpening his knife, or doing some other odd job. He was always correcting Cock, as to names of ships, dates, and captains.

'I say, Svenson,' Cock would say. 'You remember that time we were lying together at Valparaiso, and I got pinched, and they made me carry corpses?'

'That was not Valparaiso,' the Swede would answer. 'The time we were lying together at Valparaiso I had the pox very bad, and did not go ashore at all.'

'I know that well, Svenson. But don't you remember how I carried the corpses, a whole gang of us, and you all laughed at us? So I threw down a bleedin' corpse, took off my coat, and says: "Come on, you lot of . . ." '

'That was not Valparaiso,' the Swede would answer. 'It might be somewhere, but I never hear it before.'

'God strike me deaf, dumb, and crippled, Swede, if it ain't the truth.'

But nothing could persuade the Swede to deflect from his adherence to actual fact, and for that reason during the whole trip, Watts always told the story of the corpses, and tried to make the Swede say that he remembered it.

'The trouble with you, Swede,' he would say, 'is that you can't prevent yourself getting married. Look at him. He has hardly got a tooth left, and he has ten children in Cardiff. Ashore every man's wife is my wife. Blime! I get too much of it.

A Scotchman named Ross was an enemy of Watts', for the reason that Watts was the most important personage in the fo'c'sle, and that Ross felt that he himself should be the most important personage. Ross

was a mysterious man. Nobody knew anything about him, and he kept more or less aloof. He was a very handsome man, dark, with clipped dark moustaches, and very proud of his person, which he kept in excellent trim. He had the soft face-flesh of the sensualist, heavy of neck, with moist eyes and lips. Although he was very strong, he eschewed heavy labour as much as possible and was always hankering after something, restless, although he lay a great deal in his bunk. Watts irritated him for some reason, probably because the genial cockney was happy in his life, loving ships, their hard work, their roaming, and their habit of getting to strange ports, where there was good drink and cheap love. Ross, on the other hand, was discontented with the sea, because of its poverty and its remoteness from brilliant gaiety and wealth.

'You make me sick, Cock,' he would say, lying on his back in his bunk, with his hands beneath his head.

There was also a Welshman called Jones, a foolish fellow who brought himself into ridicule by claiming one day, for want of a better boast, to make himself of consequence, that he was a love-child, being foisted on his father's marriage bed by a certain Welsh peer. He was a big, soft fellow, interesting solely by the taint of noble bastardy that he plastered on himself. I liked a quiet Irishman who was there, by name Harty, a man sober of speech, gentle of manner, and extremely efficient in his work. He rarely spoke, but was always ready to oblige his comrades. Lastly, there was a young Englishman who had once been an apprentice, but had gone into the Air Force during the

war, and was now studying for his ticket as an able seaman. His name was Halliday.

I had very little work to do, but I pulled my weight with the rest, and took on work outside my own sphere simply for the reason that I felt really fit for the first time after the war, and I was bursting with energy. It was a glorious feeling. I could sleep all night, as I did not have to stand watch or take the wheel or look out. I awoke in the morning, brisk, with a clean mouth, smelt the sea air on the fo'c'sle-head, and did a caper like a young goat. Sometimes I was sent to work with the apprentices, both of whom were jolly lads, and to whom I was a hero, because, although I was not much older than they were, and I was officially a 'boy,' I had had 'romantic experiences,' which are the life blood of English youth. We three used to work in the lazarette, setting the ship's stores in order, or in the water-tank, cleaning it out, or polishing brasses, when I was not doing heavy work in the hatches with the able-bodied crew. Finally the work of polishing brasses became practically my sole occupation, because the captain discovered that my imagination amused him.

One day while Watts had the wheel, and I was polishing the brasses in the wheel-house, the captain came in without us being aware of him, because I was trying to emulate Watts' lying capacity by telling a whopper on my own account. Using my intention to walk from Rio to Mexico as a basis, I was recounting my adventures in the Brazilian forests with great gusto, to such an extent that even Watts believed the story, and allowed the ship to go a few points off her

course, while I murdered savages and strangled mountain lions, and tamed extraordinary tropical birds, of a beauty greater than any that Hudson ever saw or heard. Suddenly the captain seized me by the scruff of the neck, told Watts what he thought of him, and dragged me out of the wheel-house. He looked at me with great ferocity for a few moments, and then suddenly burst out laughing.

'What the hell made you go to sea?' he said.

'I don't know, sir. Possibly because it amuses me for the moment.'

'By God! You're a funny fellow. Ever got a good hiding?'

'Often.'

'Would ye like one now?'

'It wouldn't be a fair match, sir.'

Again he burst out laughing, and drawing me aside, he whispered:

'D'ye know any other good stories? The bloody books I brought aboard are no good.' Then he added to himself, but aloud: 'That chief gives me the colic.'

'Well,' I said. 'It's rather difficult to tell a yarn straight off the reel.'

'You were in the war, weren't ye?'

So I began to invent stories about the war for him. And that was how I got the sinecure job of polishing brasses. I used to lie on the binnacle-top practically all day, with my belly to the sun, except when the captain howled at me to come down and tell him a story. It was really very comic. In my bunk at night, I had to invent these stories, and sometimes found it

very difficult, until I became thoroughly acquainted with the captain's mind. Then it was easy work, as it did not matter how often I told him the same story, provided there was a little variation of detail. I worked on the same system used by writers of leading articles and magazine story-writers, being very careful to avoid any strange ideas, abstract theories, or traits of character that are generally considered 'bad form.' And the captain swallowed them with the swooning awe of a little child.

Now and again, he used to get very angry after I had finished a tale, as if some primitive instinct in him had been disturbed. He would look at me with a queer malice in his eyes. His fists would double up, and he would shout:

'Get on with your work, you son of a bitch. Get down into the hold and help with the bilges.'

I grew very fond of him, and ceased to have any respect for him. As soon as one individual has explored the mind of another, he attains power over the other.

It was glorious lying on the binnacle-top as we steamed through the Mediterranean, beneath a brilliant sun. The mind, half asleep, wandered pleasantly back through the centuries, contemplating all the human traffic on that sea and all the store of poetry that has been fashioned from its waters, all the greatness of Greece, and of Rome, and of the Italian cities, whose commerce passed that way. With closed eyes it was easy to forget the moment, factories, shells, slums, and the ugly side of modern life, in a daydream of the past. But the greatest pleasure was to feel strong and

indolent, so strong and indolent that I laughed when I stretched my limbs. It is that feeling which nothing can purchase, neither wealth, nor fame, nor any other form of social achievement. Alas! Fortunate youth is its possessor.

It was equally beautiful in the evening, when the sun had set and night was creeping over the moonlit sea, to stand on the fo'c'sle-head and feel the breezes blowing about my legs and see, perhaps, a ship pass, with a band playing on her decks, or a fleet of fishing vessels, with their bellied sails careening, or just watch the ship's prow cutting the smooth water. And then to sleep without dreaming.

Sometimes in the evening we ran races through the rigging. A fireman called Smith, who had been in the Royal Navy, always won these races. Sometimes we wrestled, and there was a trimmer who played the melodeon excellently. The cook would come forward to listen to the melodeon, and he always got extremely melancholy, and went away wiping his eyes with his dirty apron.

Life on that ship was very beautiful until we arrived at Salonika.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SMYRNA

We called first at Salonika, where we spent five days waiting for orders. We lay out in the harbour, but went ashore once to have a look at the town. It was full of soldiers, mostly from Balkan countries.

The Romans could do nothing with these countries. Their inhabitants are as barbarous to-day as they were five hundred years ago, a thousand years ago, and two thousand years ago. They are a bad smell.

We were ordered to Smyrna, where we arrived after a short and pleasant voyage. I was delighted with the place. I was once asked to write a paper for a Classical Society on the Greek colonies in Asia Minor, and became so enamoured of the subject that I rejected the idea of writing the paper. Instead, I spent six months making a study of these colonies, and of their history down into modern times. I have now forgotten practically all the details of that history, but there remains the vital impression of the forces that made that history so interesting, the various floods of human energy spreading out from different sources and surging against one another, in battle, in commerce and cultural rivalry, on that coast where Europe and Asia

join. Hither come the Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, and Turkish floods. Hither come the Phœnician, the Greek, the Macedonian, the Roman, and the western European floods. And these coastal towns, from Ilium to Chanak, have become poetic landmarks in the rivalry of two continents. Sometimes the Asiatic floods have swept down into Europe as far as the plains of Hungary and the Athenian Acropolis. Sometimes the European floods have swept over all Asia; but always at this point, where Europe meets Asia, lip near lip, like two magnets, drawn near by a central force, but never meeting, the eternal rivalry between European man and Asiatic man becomes apparent and dynamic.

It was curious also that I arrived in Smyrna just about a month before the Greeks began their disastrous march into Turkey, after the seizure of Smyrna. Ships from all the allied fleets lay in the harbour, prominent among them being the Greek warships, less prominent by their actual merit as warships than by their arrogance and dirt. It was the spring of 1919, and the victorious European allies, like birds of prey, were assembled here, croaking in argument as to which was to devour the carcass of the Turkish beast, which had fought for Germany. They handed it to the Greek crow, which merely stirred it into life by feeble pecking. And certainly, at that time, the Turk looked easy to devour.

I shall never forget the impression made on me by my first view of the Turks, a race which I have always admired for its bravery in battle, its simplicity, and its courtesy, a pastoral race like my own.

We arrived there early in the morning, and after we

had made the ship fast, we were put to work chipping the old paint off her sides. To do this, a plank held by movable ropes is let down the ship's side, and two men sit on each plank, chipping with small pointed hammers. My companion was Ross, the mysterious Scotchman. Neither I nor anyone else of the crew had much intercourse with him during the voyage, as he kept a great deal to himself, and seemed to nourish a passion for seclusion, which contrasted oddly with his very sensual face, and his irritation, often expressed in forcible language, with the menial life of a seaman. I was astonished, therefore, when he turned to me as we were sitting on the plank and said:

'Can you keep your mouth shut?'

I was rather surprised at the question, because I had been silent, half-asleep, as I chipped and dreamt under the beautifully warm sun. I looked at him and said:

'How do you mean?'

'You know what I mean?' he said.

He winked. I remembered my criminal friend Mr. Jenkins, and understood what he meant. At once the man became excitingly interesting. So I answered him with another wink.

'Can you use a gun?' he said.

'Moderately well,' I replied.

'Would you like to make twenty quid?'

'It all depends.'

'Ye needn't worry about that,' he said. 'Ye'll just have to stand by and see I'm not robbed or cheated.'

'That sounds simple enough,' I said.

'I'll tell ye about it later,' he said, as the enormous Russian bo'sun looked over the side to see were we busy.

Until the mid-day rest for food, we worked in silence, and he made no further reference to his project. Neither did he approach me on the matter when we were all gathered about the fo'c'sle. While we were leaning against the side, smoking, after our meal, I noticed a very dapper Jew walking up and down the pier, inspecting the crew with apparent lack of interest, and yet with a persistence that belied his casualness. One or two of the firemen addressed insulting remarks to him, but he took no notice whatsoever. The fellows began to offer conjectures as to his profession, and the general opinion was that he was a pander for a brothel; but as he made no attempt to offer us advertisements for any such house it seemed unlikely that he was a pander.

Ross was leaning over the side with us. Suddenly he said:

'I'm going to find out what that bloke wants.'

He jumped on to the pier and walked up to the Jew. We saw them converse for a little while. Then Ross climbed back on to the ship.

'You're all wrong,' he said. 'He's a respectable shopkeeper, looking for custom. I think I'll buy a suit from him. They should be cheap here on account of the fall of the piastre.'

When we went back to work, Ross said to me:

'Are you on for what I told you about this morning?'

I nodded.

Later he said to me:

'Can you swim?'

'Yes.'

'Well! See here. I want to hand you over that gun while nobody is looking. So I have an idea. Just about half an hour before we knock off we'll loosen this rope, see here, like this, and then we'll tumble off into the water. We'll swim around until they throw us a ladder. Then we'll have to go into the fo'c'sle to change our wet clothes. Follow me? We'll get into our shore clothes, and you can have the gun packed away by the time the fellows knock off. Then we'll be first ashore.'

I agreed. He got a trifle excited as the afternoon wore on, and for no apparent reason began to denounce the Roman Catholic Church, accusing priests, especially those that worked among the middle classes in industrial towns, such as Glasgow and Liverpool, of having questionable relationships with women whose husbands were away at work. He got very excited over this trifling question on the grounds of public morality.

At that time I was feeling too healthy physically, and indolent mentally, to have any interest in social questions, and least of all in anything relating to orthodox religions. So I remained silent, chipping casually, while he tiraded against priests with great violence. He mistook the cause of my silence, and he said:

'I suppose you are a Roman Catholic, like all Irishmen.'

'On the contrary,' I said. 'I have no interest in

religion, except in so far as I object to the cult of Jesus Christ, on personal grounds.'

'How do you mean, personal grounds?' he said.

'Well,' I said. 'It's difficult to explain. But if you say, for instance, that Bob Fitzsimmons was the greatest boxer that ever lived, and another objects, claiming that Jack Johnson is the greatest boxer that ever lived, that is an objection on personal grounds. I mean . . .'

I stopped, realising that my attempt to explain was futile. Ross became very indignant.

'D'ye mean to say,' he cried, 'that ye have no religion?'

'Quite so,' I said. 'I dislike the character and teaching of Jesus Christ, but personally, mark you, from an intellectual point of view.'

Noticing that he stared at me in an almost terrified manner, I suddenly realised that our conversation was extremely odd for two seamen on board a tramp steamer, and that Ross, in particular, was an odd sort of fellow; indeed, very probably as odd as myself. So I said:

'Are you really an able seaman? I mean, are you a genuine seafaring man.'

'I object to atheism,' he said.

Then he struck the ship's side a terrific blow that put a slight dent in it, and said:

'There is a God.'

I bowed, being unable to make any comment on this bald statement.

'Whatever I have done,' he continued, 'I still believe in God, and when I die I go before my God with

confidence that he'll see me through. But my home was broken up by these damned scoundrels.'

His eyes blazed with that extraordinary fanaticism to which puritans are addicted. I began to feel chary of having anything to do with him. However, my curiosity is always stronger than any feeling of shrewd doubt, when confronted with situations that might lead me into trouble. We became silent without my being able to discover anything further about his history. As for him, he appeared to have no interest in my history.

Just about half an hour before it was time to knock off, we loosened the rope, upset the plank, and tumbled backwards into the sea with a great splash. Then we swam about calling for help. They threw down a ladder, and we climbed on deck. We were allowed to go to the fo'c'sle to change our clothes. The fo'c'sle was empty. After seeing that we were not under observation, Ross unlocked his kitbag, and took out a revolver, which he gave me, together with a small bag containing ammunition. I put them in my overcoat pocket. Then he took out another packet from the interior of his pillow, and stowed it away in a belt next to his person. I was looking at it with interest, when he turned to me angrily and said:

'Ask no questions. I'll tell ye all about this later.'

'I see,' I said, rather doubtfully.

'It's got nothing to do with you,' he said. 'It's all square and above ground, my own property. Get your shore kit on.'

We dressed hurriedly, and got finished just as the

men were coming off duty. They all chaffed us on our cleverness in falling into the water in order to be first ashore. Then we left the ship, without their suspecting that our haste had any other motive than our eagerness to get a drink.

We hurried along to the dock gates. Ross was very nervous. The pier was made of planks which resounded under our feet, and he asked me several times to make less noise with my shoes. Then he worried me about the state of my clothes, which were creased in a dreadful manner after having lain in a bundle in my kitbag. He said I attracted attention. I began to get irritated with him, and threatened to back out of the whole business, whatever it was, unless he offered to become less offensive and less rattled.

'In any case,' I said, 'what have you got to fear? If you have anything improper on hand you needn't count on my help.'

'All right,' he said. 'As soon as we get outside, I'll get you a decent kit.'

His own clothes were in a very proper state, as he had bribed the steward to look after them on board.

We passed out of the docks without anybody taking any notice of us. Immediately after we had crossed over from the dock railings to the pavement on the far side of the road, a picket of Bluejackets swung around the corner of a lane, and marched beside us, going in the same direction. Ross muttered something in my ear, and went pale in the face as one of the Bluejackets hailed us.

'What ship are you from, mates?'

I told him, out of Cardiff. They all began to warn us against Turkish pox, and went past at a swinging pace, laughing merrily. A fine lot of fellows, these naval men. But they had an astonishing effect on Ross. As soon as they had gone past, he halted, gripping me by the arm to support himself.

'What the devil is the matter?' I cried.

'Let's have a drink,' he said.

There was a wine-shop near by. We entered and had a drink. Ross got the proprietor to send out a boy for a cab, which arrived after ten minutes or so, a shocking contrivance like a landau, drawn by an aged pony whose bones stuck out. We got into this carriage, and the whole staff of the wine-shop saw us off, just as if we were important official personages; for the reason, probably, that they were Greeks, with designs on Turkey, and they looked upon us as agents of Lloyd George, who was at that time Prime Minister and strongly under the influence of Lord Byron. Ross had some difficulty in explaining to the cab-driver where he wanted to go, but at last succeeded. We went along the promenade, which is very pretty indeed, rather like the Promenade des Anglais at Nice, but more impressive.

I was at once struck by the atmosphere of gloom that hung over the city; the gloom of defeat. It was in the hands of the enemy. Foreign sailors, armed, marched through its streets and maintained order. Groups of foreign residents, Armenians and Greeks, were waiting, with leers of malicious delight on their faces, for the further discomfiture of their rulers, the

Turks. And the Turks went about with sad dignity, bearing their defeat with the sullen pride of their race.

As we moved slowly along the promenade in our ridiculous carriage, I felt extremely indignant at the fate of these noble Turks, who, as it were, were being held down by two other noble races and their less noble allies, while Armenians and Greeks did the kicking.

The Turks have been the most maligned race in history, as far as Europeans are concerned. To begin with, the slander of which they have been the victims was inspired by fear. It must be remembered that they terrorised Europe for many years. But they have mainly been the victims of Christianity in so far as their reputation is concerned. Their name has for a long time been synonymous with corruption, brutality, and base sexual degradation. Yet the facts of history, and the social structure of their communities, together with their bravery in war and their chivalry towards captured prisoners, gives the lie to these slanders. In fact, a great deal of their early successes in Europe was due to the fact that the masses of Christian peasants, oppressed by Christian feudalism and the usury of Christian merchants, were in the habit of deserting *en masse* to the Turkish banner, under which the common man had a greater measure of freedom than under the banner of Christian Europe. The Turks handed over the business of base traffic to the Christians among them, the Greeks and Armenians, as also their civil services, and in that manner their ruling class became corrupt through inactivity, after they were forced to

stack their arms, when the flood of their expansion had gone so far from its source that it lost its impetus and halted. But the bulk of their populations, the peasants, never became corrupt; which they proved in the last war and since the war, by the manner in which they have responded to the organising genius of Kemal Pasha.

There were crowds in the streets, wandering about aimlessly in that restrained manner which is typical of crowds in a city on the eve of revolution or civil war. And as a result of this tense expectation, there was heavy drinking, libertinism, and evidence on all sides that nobody considered himself responsible for the safety or the well-being of the community.

Near the far end of the promenade, we turned to the left into a side street, and then followed a maze of narrow streets, halting at last outside a small shop, where we left the cab, telling it to wait. We entered the shop, after Ross had whispered to me to keep close to him, and let the people within see that I had a gun in my pocket. I distinctly felt like leaving him at this moment, because I began to be under the impression that he was mad. However, I followed him into the shop, and was surprised to find myself face to face with the elegant Jew whom we had noticed on the pier at noon. He and Ross entered into conversation. There were two other men in the room, either Jews or Greeks or Armenians; I could not tell the difference. The principal Jew bowed, and begged Ross to follow him into an inner room. Ross beckoned me to follow him. The Jew looked at me and shrugged his shoulders.

Both he and Ross spoke in a language I did not understand. Ross apparently insisted that I should accompany him, which I did. We passed through a curtain, and then waited in an extremely dark place, while the Jew opened a door, as far as I could see, by pressing some spring. Then we went through a passage, and reached another door, which the Jew also opened. We entered a small room fitted out like an office. I remember that it had a curious smell which irritated me and made me feel nervous. When we entered this room it was empty, but in a minute or so a strange man entered. He looked like a Russian of an Eastern type, having very high cheek-bones and a ferocious expression, with a Chinese slant to his eyes. He was dressed like a European, or rather like an American. He eyed me unpleasantly. The three of them went over to a desk in the corner, and carried on a long conversation, until Ross undid his clothes and produced the packet which had aroused my curiosity. He looked back once, and winked at me in an excited fashion. The Jew and the ferocious character examined the contents of the packet, then apparently tied it up again (I could not see what was in it, as the Jew's back concealed it from me) and the conversation continued. Ross struck the desk and gesticulated. Now and again he swore in English, pointed at me, and struck his chest. The Mongolian spat on the floor several times, and the Jew shrugged his whole body so violently that I thought his clothes would slip off.

At last there was silence. The Jew sat down, un-

locked a drawer, and pulled out a box. Ross smiled, and rubbed his hands together. The Jew counted out a great pile of Turkish banknotes, then some American dollars, and finally a sum of English money, in notes. Ross secreted the notes on his person, so deftly that he must have been long in the habit of disposing of money in that manner. Then, accompanied by the Jew, Ross and I left the room without saluting the stranger. We returned to the shop.

Ross was now in a very elated state, slapped me on the back, twisted his moustaches, and comforted himself in a very exaggerated manner, talking at a great rate, in extravagant fashion, about the most diverse and ridiculous things, just like a man who has staked all his money on an outsider at a race meeting, and won a large sum by the most sheer luck. Such a punter will insist on buying champagne for utter strangers, and maintain that his judgment of horseflesh is infallible, even though the common hack that carried his money was the worst horse in the race.

He insisted on buying a quantity of clothes and other articles to grace his person and mine, while I stood by in silence offering no objection, as it all seemed to me a sort of fairy-tale, or indeed an adventure story written by a schoolgirl, and utterly incredible. I had no idea what Ross had sold, and I have still no idea what he sold.

I dressed myself in a smart brown suit of questionable taste, to which I added pointed shoes and insisted on having a fez in the Turkish fashion, a walking-stick with a carved head, representing a young woman, a

ring, and a pair of gloves, which were really very beautiful. Ross wanted to press other things on me, but I refused. He himself gorged his body with exotic accoutrements, displaying a degree of sensuality which was astonishing in a Scotchman. He paid, and we left the shop. We entered our carriage, and drove away, smoking enormous cigars to which the Jew had treated us.

'We'll go and have dinner,' he said. 'I'll give you that twenty pounds now, before I forget it.'

'You had better not forget,' I said, 'because I have no money.'

He paid me the money in American dollars at the rate of five to the pound.

'How the devil did you get all that money?' I said.

'Don't ask questions,' he said cheerfully, 'and you'll be told no lies. All you need know is that everything is perfectly on the level. It's all in the nature of strictly honourable business.'

He talked like a drunken man. The carriage halted in front of a Greek restaurant. He threw some money at the cabman, and we entered. A handsome young boy, wearing a pinafore, or what looked like a pinafore, led us to our table, and we proceeded to have a tremendous meal, to the accompaniment of a lavish supply of wine, of a quality which it has not been my good fortune to taste many times in my life. Possibly its excellence sprang from the generosity of my palate, which, having been starved of late, was eager to praise even a moderate vintage. But whatever may have been the cause, the fact was that we got hilariously intoxicated.

Now an extremely odd trait manifested itself in Ross's character. Having shown a little while before that he was possessed of the ridiculous generosity of the spendthrift, he now went to the opposite pole of meanness. When the bill was presented, he flew into a furious rage, had the manager brought and denounced the fellow as a scoundrel, a cheat, a common cut-throat, a man unfit to consort with pimps, a lead-roof robber, a despoiler of young virgins, a bastard son of a whore's daughter by a poxy priest and addressed him by many other titles that would have struck terror into the Greek had he understood them. It was also strange that Ross, whom I had heard speaking in a foreign language to the Jew and to the Mongolian, now seemed incapable of speaking in any language other than broad Scotch, of the kind fashionable in the slums of Glasgow. At last the Greek, with perspiration pouring down his face, turned to me and cried:

'Jesus Christ! One, two, three, four bottles. Ten dollars. Me broke!'

I made an attempt to pay, but Ross arrogantly checked me, and cried:

'Have no truck with these bastards. Who won the war? Come on. Clean up all these damn Turks.'

'Turk!' cried the Greek, catching at the word and going into a frenzy. 'Who Turk?' He struck his chest. 'Me Greek. Ally.'

'I'll give you Greek, you yellow cockroach,' cried Ross, making a swing at him and missing him, as the Greek rushed back and caught a knife from a table.

Somebody ran out into the street and began to cry,

apparently for police; but without any effect, as the Turkish police were afraid to interfere with a European, and the naval pickets who were keeping the Europeans in order took no notice of the natives. At least they took no notice of this particular Greek, since none of them came.

Then Ross seized me by the arm, and dragged me out of the place. We left, followed to the door by the manager and by all the waiters and by a few of the customers. The young boy in the pinafore followed us down the street, running beside us with the bill in his hand, and attracting considerable public attention.

'For God's sake, let's pay him,' I said.

'Not on any account,' said Ross.

'Well! Let me pay him, then,' I said.

'Not on any account,' said Ross. 'It's sheer robbery.'

'What is robbery? The bill?'

'Everything is robbery,' said Ross. 'Not a penny. It's a conspiracy.'

Suddenly he turned and chased the boy, shouting. A crowd of natives gathered from all sides and asked the boy what was the matter. Seeing a number of his own people, the boy halted and faced Ross. I came up, and we were surrounded by a great crowd, who talked violently without our knowing a word of what they were saying. At last a R.N. Petty Officer came by, pushed his way into the crowd, and asked what was the matter.

'Arrest all these people,' said Ross.

'What for?' said the sailor.

'They're trying to rob me,' said Ross.

'No,' I said. 'It's really an argument about a bill.'

'What bill?' said the sailor.

I explained the situation. Then suddenly Ross pulled out a quantity of money, and wanted to give it all to the boy, but the boy for some reason refused to accept it, pointing to the sum at the foot of the note.

'Here,' cried Ross. 'I'm paying you double.'

'Don't be a fool,' said the sailor. 'How much is it? Ten dollars. Give him seven. They always put on fifty per cent. at least.'

He gave the boy seven dollars of Ross's money, and then gave him for tip a smart kick in the rump. The lad ran off. So did the crowd. We brought the Petty Officer with us to have a drink. On the way, he remarked on my fez, and asked me whether I was a resident in Turkey. I told him I had just set foot in the country. Whereupon he advised me to get rid of the fez, as it might get me into trouble. A sailor might hit me for fun, thinking I was a Turk. I threw the fez into the gutter.

He brought us to a wine-shop where we found a number of sailors, both naval and mercantile marine, of various European nationalities. It looked a romantic place, with a flagged floor, and everything of wood, the drinking-bowls, the wine-barrels, the tables, and the stools. The sailors looked like pirates, a number of them being armed with large Turkish pistols, which they bought as curiosities. They were all singing uproariously, some in English, some in French, some in Dutch, and some in Norwegian, as far as I was informed by their nationalities. We found a table.

'Now,' said the Petty Officer, as he gave himself more room amidships, 'there is nothing like drinking properly. There is a science of drinking, and it entirely depends on the climate. I object to casual drinking. It's like guerrilla warfare. Cut and run. There's nothing to it. Give me a pitched battle, a general engagement, a regular Trafalgar, sink or win. In this country the best line of attack is this.'

He began to count on the fingers of his left hand with his right thumb.

'First a glass of malaga. Then a glass of cognac. Then a glass of water. Then a cognac, then water, then cognac, then another malaga, then cognac, then water, and so on, keeping the tally so as not to get mixed up, so you have three cognacs to a malaga, tanking up all the time on water to flood the kidneys. And finally, first man under the table pays the bill. Everybody agreed?'

At that time I was a young and inexperienced drinker, and although I had a fair beer record in the army, I knew next to nothing about spirit drinking. The Petty Officer, on the other hand, had the build of a spirit drinker, a lean fellow, who was obviously (by his complexion) well inoculated with alcohol, without being a sot, and thereby incapable of holding. Ross's powers were doubtful, as men who are influenced by sudden whimsies of the senses are rarely sturdy and dogged drinkers. Why! The man was already tipsy. I rather suspected that the Petty Officer was taking a mean advantage, in order to win a mean victory. However, I struck the table, and said I accepted his

challenge. Ross nodded, and smelt a bottle of scent he had bought.

'Are there no women here?' he said.

'Women!' cried the Petty Officer. 'Nonsense, my boy. Women can't drink. I object to women while I'm drinking. Everything in its own place. Bed is no place to drink.'

'Very well,' said Ross. 'Later.'

'Later,' said the sailor.

The proprietor approached, and judging from the manner in which he received the Petty Officer, I could see that the latter was a respected personage in the establishment.

We were fetched a slate, a piece of chalk, a jar of water, glasses, a bottle of cognac, and another of malaga. The proprietor rubbed his hands and smiled on us.

'I'll be master of ceremonies, if you lads don't mind,' said the Petty Officer. 'When I drink we all drink. If a man drops behind, he's counted out, same as if he dropped under the table. That goes all round? Right. Here's to us.'

We clinked, toasted, and polished our malaga as one man. Immediately, the Petty Officer filled the cognac glasses, which we polished, as one man, without further ceremony. Then, at our leisure, we drank a large tumblerful of water each. We lit cigarettes and smoked.

'Olives,' said the sailor, calling the proprietor. 'Black olives, and bring us salt fish on toast. If it stinks, it's all the better. There's no use having a knock-out in the first round. The stomach must be well oiled and salted.'

They brought us a dish of good olives, together with a plate of fish on toast. Damned astonishing fish it was too, cut in little bits that lay on tiny square pieces of toast, with a thin match-stick, like a mast, stuck in each bit, for use as fork. It stank horribly, and judging by its colour, taste, and toughness, it must have been peddled, dry, by the first Greek fishermen that pulled into that port, some thousands of years previously. The first bite took our breath away, and caused such a thirsty ache in our stomachs that we swallowed the next two cognacs, with their water chasers, at incredible speed. Then after a short pause, during which we puffed and swelled our chests, we began to eat the olives, feeling an extraordinary elation that was in no way related to drunkenness.

Personally I felt myself become possessed of great power, which entered into my muscles with violence, so that I had difficulty in restraining myself from performing feats of strength. The possession of this strength did not give rise to any sort of choler. On the contrary, it produced a genial temper, so that, although I was convinced that I could seize the Petty Officer by the arm and hurl him through the wall of the tavern, over the roofs of the city, and across the harbour on to the deck of his ship, I felt extremely well disposed towards him, and took care not to brush him with my sleeve, lest he might receive some hurt. My brain, stirred into activity by the goodly fumes that rose into it, performed the labours of a thousand brains, and each of them was gifted with genius of ambitious quality. So that I roamed the world as I sat, and decor-

ated every star in the firmament with the creations of my fantasy, conquered continents, upturned oceans, and made history retrace its tracks unto its source, where I studied the social habits of our fishy ancestors. Not this earth alone but the whole universe became containable within the compass of my imagination, which, like a giddy bee, went buzzing through its spaces, tasting, without surfeit, its most choice delights. I transformed my surroundings. I enlarged the proportions of my companions, making Ross a financier of unlimited wealth and sinister lusts. The Petty Officer became the admiral-in-chief of a mighty fleet. I myself became an emperor of majestic territories whose dimensions would have made Tiberius rank as a paltry peasant. All round me I saw groups of minions, celebrating our magnificence with shouts, potations, and gestures of obeisance.

Simultaneously I took part in and listened to the conversation at our table, without at all hindering the jig-acting of my brain, which dual sport kept my senses in such motion that I remained physically sober, as the bodies of my companions began to reel and sway, being without the aid of similar dream-filled bladders to support the heavy drug-load of their muscles.

As I expected, Ross was the first to become inarticulate. As we tapped the third bottle of brandy, I noticed that his eyes had turned a queer colour, and that his tongue had begun to dangle slightly. He began to babble, and hiccupped and made gestures which were not guided by a conscious will. He attempted to

rise, and subsided without effecting anything. Then suddenly he collapsed, with his arms stretched out, and his left cheek on the board, like a dying sheep, gurgling at the nostrils. As he fell, I saved the brandy bottle from impact with his head, but with his hand he brushed two glasses to the floor.

'Now,' I said to the sailor, 'we are confronted with a difficult question. Is Ross under the table or not? Unless he falls under the table he cannot be counted out.'

The Petty Officer moodily pursed his lips, and thickly answered:

'Proviso number two says that if a man fails to drink his round he's out. Drink. What does the slate say? Malaga?'

'No. It should be water.'

'Water!' he cried angrily. 'Water! You're done for.'

'Never,' I cried. 'I'll tell you what we'll do. You and I begin another bout. Ross pays up till now. You and I'll drink on the same conditions. Are you game?'

'Game?' he said. 'It's like taking milk from a child. There. I put a line under that list. Here we are. One glass of malaga.'

'Hey! Hey!' I cried. 'Don't spill it. Let me pour.'

I took the bottle and poured. He eyed me suspiciously, and said:

'I'm going to watch you, laddie. You're dumping your drinks.'

'Don't worry,' I said. 'I'll see that nobody robs you when you fall.'

At that he became furious, and we drank practically without pause. Now a crowd had gathered round

our table, and cheered us as we drank. It was a neck-to-neck finish, and although the Petty Officer was the first to go, falling backwards and sideways to the floor, I was so groggy that I was only dimly aware he had fallen. But I got a great cheer, and the sailors shook me by the hand, and slapped me so violently on the back that I almost sickened in their presence. And to show their appreciation of my feat, they insisted on ordering me drinks, which, of course, was an utterly preposterous way of favouring me, since I could not swallow another drop.

When the score was paid, Ross and myself marched out of the tavern arm-in-arm, and the Petty Officer was carried out by some men of his ship, all *en route* to a house of amusement.

We had not gone far when the sailors turned into a brilliantly lit doorway. Looking up at the house which they had entered, I saw all the windows gaudily furnished, and two women, perched at one window, leaning out and signalling with their arms to all who chanced to pass. The sound of quaint music issued from the house, and allits three tall storeys were loud with the varied tumults of debauch. We were saluted in the hall by an elderly female of enormous size. She led us up the stairs, on to a landing and thence along a corridor, on either side of which there were many rooms, all of which were occupied. There was a mob here of men and women passing and a drunken gaiety of a lewdness which I had not previously witnessed. Then we entered a large room at the far end of the corridor.

Here I saw an astounding sight. A group of Turkish musicians were seated on cushions in one of the farther corners, twanging their instruments, and singing in a mournful voice. All round the great room there was a crowd of men and women, none of them sober, swaying to the music, singing, laughing, and fondling one another with great abandonment. None of the women were in any sense fully clothed, and some of the men had also shed the greater part of their wear. In the centre of the floor two girls were performing a curious dance, each holding a rose with which she flirted.

I sat on the floor beside Ross, intending to keep an eye on him, lest he might be robbed, as he was still stupefied. Almost at once, a very beautiful young Greek woman approached him, and he roused himself in a surprising way as soon as he felt her presence. He made a move to get up and go with her. I cautioned him.

'You leave it to me,' he whispered. 'I can take care of myself. See you in the morning. Don't leave till I get up.'

He went off. Another girl approached me, but as she had none of the Greek wench's beauty, I signalled my displeasure, and she went away. The dance still went on, getting more and more abandoned, while the numbers of the spectators ebbed and flowed continually, those who left being continually replaced by new-comers.

Then a grey-haired sailor, whom I afterwards learned to be the chief mate or captain of a sailing vessel,

jumped to his feet, and danced out into the middle of the floor towards the dancing girls with comic gestures. I have never seen such a ludicrous sight. He was so thin that his bones stuck out, and his skin was the colour of parchment, and he had the curious knack of being able to walk with his heels practically in front of his toes.

He chased the girls around the room, and they avoided him, laughing wildly. I also began to laugh, and once I had begun to laugh I could not stop, so that I lost my breath, and my stomach ached. I cried out for a drink of water. A boy fetched me a bowl, whose contents I swallowed at a draught. I immediately fell down unconscious to the floor. It was vodka, and not water.

Apparently nobody paid any heed to me, and I have no consciousness of how long I lay there, or of what happened to the hunt of the dancing girls by the drunken sea-captain; but at some hour of the night I was rudely awakened by a pair of huge blacks, who held me by the shoulders. Looking around, I saw that the room was empty, except for a woman of great beauty, who stood by the door, smiling on me. I could only see her dark head and her face. The rest of her body was concealed with a long, loose cloak. At her command the men lifted me and carried me along the corridor, then up a flight of stairs, with her in front, down another corridor, and into a room. There they put me down. They took off all my clothes, and laid them at the foot of a large divan. I kept an eye on their movements lest they might plunder me. Then they

gave me a robe, rather similar to the one worn by the lady. Then they laid me on the divan, and gave me drink in a large wine-glass. I noticed something at the bottom of the glass, like pieces of hop or liquorice. Whatever was in it, I felt considerably revived.

Then the lady signed to the two, and said some thing. They left the room. She sat beside me on the divan, and addressed me first in Greek, which I did not understand, and then in French. I told her my nationality.

'I am a Circassian,' she said. 'Do you love me? You are pretty.'

'And you,' I answered, 'justify everything I have read of Circassian women. How can a woman of your beauty and refinement be content to live in a house like this?'

She shrugged her shoulders, and said:

'C'est la guerre.'

'Damn the war!' I cried in English. 'It pursues me still, even to a house in Turkey. Is there no escape from it?'

'You curse,' she said. 'You say damn. Why?'

'I was merely angry,' I replied, 'that one as beautiful as you should have suffered. Tell me about it.'

'Not now,' she said. 'The power of the wine you have drunk does not last long. When that power is spent we shall talk.'

I agreed. Later we smoked, and she told me about herself.

'A rich man of Constantinople took me into his harem. He had great power in the Government, and

as he loved me very much I was fortunate, and so were my people. My two brothers became officers in the Turkish army through my influence. Then the war came. I was given to the German general, Von . . ., a cruel man, without cunning in love. He soon tired of me, because I did not love him, and gave me to one of his staff officers. With him I was happy, but he got killed, and then I was shared by three sergeants. Afterwards the Germans went away, and I came here. But I still have money and jewels, and I live here only for protection. Otherwise I am independent. Take me with you to Europe. Are you a great man in your own country.?'

I was falling asleep, and I answered foolishly.

'I a great man! No, I am a sailor.'

'What? But you are not dressed like a sailor. You are not rough like a sailor.

'Never mind,' I said. 'I'm a sailor.'

I began to doze. She said something angrily, probably in Turkish. Then she clapped her hands. Utterly indifferent to what happened to me, I allowed myself to be carried off the divan by the attendants, to be dressed in my own clothes, and carried out of the room, down the stairs, and back into the room where they had found me, and there thrown without ceremony on the floor. I fell sound asleep.

I was awakened by Ross, who seemed none the worse for his experience of the previous night. In fact, he looked remarkably fresh and spruce, whereas I felt in a very bad state. Either the vodka or the Turkish loving-cup had injured me. However, I

searched my clothes nervously, and was delighted to find my money and the revolver that Ross had given me. I also remembered the Circassian woman, told Ross about her, and suggested that we should find her and bring her along. But he was bored with women.

'Don't be a fool,' he said. 'Let's get out of here.'

We left the house. Outside we saw a ludicrous sight, a young lad in the uniform of an apprentice in the merchant service, tied to a chair, and sound asleep. His whole body from head to foot was plastered with the yolks of eggs. The sun had arisen, and he was beginning to stink. We roused him, undid his bindings, scraped the dirt off his clothes as best we could, and brought him with us to the tavern. He was in a dazed condition, and yellow in the face.

The Greek saluted us with great respect, and told us that we had come in good time, as he was just on the point of broaching an excellent cask of Chian wine, a beverage, he claimed, fit for the palates of the ancient gods. He broached the cask and gave us each a bowl. The blessed stuff performed a miracle on each of us, for not only did it dispel from our bodies all the aches and gross humours of the previous night's drinking, but it produced a delicious intoxication, a violent appetite, and a flow of energy to our muscles that made us as fresh as young colts at dawn.

'I was set upon by American sailors,' said the apprentice. 'It was they tied me to the chair. I got drunk, and somebody put me out into the air to recover. The Yankees got a basket of eggs, and pelted me with them.'

We brought the lad to breakfast with us, and then we hired a carriage and drove down to the promenade, where he boarded his ship. Then we told the driver to take us to a barber's shop. The fool brought us to a horrible place, where we saw a barber shaving a customer in the open air. The place was extremely foul, and there was a dunghill and a stinking pond near by. The barber dipped his lathering brush in a dirty bucket that lay beside the chair. Both the barber and the customer were filthy. We began to curse the driver, but he merely shrugged his shoulders, and turned his horse. He brought us back into the more decent part of the town, where we found quite a clean shop, fitted creditably. There we spent two hours, and treated ourselves to every possible sort of ministration. Then we went to a café on the promenade.

Ross noticed a young woman sitting at a table near us, and it was not long before he struck up an acquaintance with her. She spoke a little English, and told us that she was a schoolmistress. Presently Ross asked her to go for a drive with him. They went off. He made arrangements to meet me later in the day. I had some lunch, and wandered off to look at the city.

I was for a long time attracted by the Greek divers who were collecting mussels off the pier. They had extremely graceful bodies, and they swam and dived beautifully, bringing up great stones in their strong arms; while an admiring crowd watched them. Then I wandered away through the town, and followed a troop of camels that were laden with green liquorice, pieces of which I tore off and chewed. People eyed me

with suspicion, and it was odd to see the Turkish women in their veils cower at the sight of a stranger. So too did the ragged Turkish sentries, whom I saw lounging outside the gates of their barracks. They begged, and I gave them cigarettes and some money. I was sometimes pursued by small boys who offered themselves as guides, and by young girls who were more brazen in their suggestions. Many of these were quite young children, and everywhere there was a disgusting atmosphere of utter degradation.

The only clean thing was an occasional Turkish peasant, who went past on horseback; lean, hungry men, with hawk's eyes. Returning to the promenade, I noticed that a large crowd had gathered around a telegraph post. Looking up, I saw a naked sailor at the top of the post. People were shouting at him to come down, but he paid no attention and sang merrily on his lofty perch. Finally two naval men climbed up and brought him down. Then I discovered that he was a fireman on our ship, the same fellow who used to win the races through the rigging. He had gone mad with drink. They took him away under arrest, for exposing his person in public, or for some such offence.

The whole place seemed to have gone mad. As far as I could see, none of the natives did any work, except such as had shops. They all strolled about, gaping at the drunken foreigners.

Ross did not meet me at the appointed place. Later in the evening I met a group of men from our ship, and joined them. We began to drink. A great crowd of other sailors joined us, and very soon the whole

promenade was astonished at our revelries. One sailor amused himself by biting large pieces off drinking glasses, and chewing the pieces. A group of sailors had procured a wheelbarrow somewhere, and they had attached ropes to it, and put one of their number sitting in it, and marched up and down in front of the cafés, halting here and there for a drink. Whenever they drank, they gave a drink to the wheelbarrow also, pouring wine on the axle. Nobody interfered with them. Other sailors bustled the natives, and tried to clear the street, and there were free fights everywhere.

I met an Irishman in a bar-room. He was a man of about forty-five or so, and had been for a long time in the East, I could not exactly discover in what capacity. He had been a prisoner of war, and hinted vaguely that he was in the Secret Service. He was an educated man of considerable talent, and I was pleased with his acquaintance, so that we dined together and talked with great interest. Finally I accompanied him to his house. He then told me that he was working at the moment as head of a school, which was patronised by Young Turks who wanted to acquire European culture. He had a large stock of Scotch whisky in his rooms, and he helped himself liberally. I was so interested in the man that I did not drink. He was obviously a sot, of a type that is met fairly frequently in Dublin, that city of improvident scholars; for although he was a sot and broken in spirit, his brain was still luminous with erudition.

'I am an outpost of Empire,' he cried truculently,

making a Napoleonic gesture. 'To-day, I and men like me are filling the same rôle that Raleigh and Frobisher and Drake filled in the Elizabethan period. We are unknown and remain unhonoured both in our lives and in our deaths, but we are imbued with the same spirit of adventure, and with the same staunch love of our culture and civilisation as were the great adventurers of the sixteenth century. The manner of our adventuring has changed with the times, but the spirit has not changed. I, who am a common tutor, still regard myself as a soldier, sowing the seeds of Empire, and let whoever wishes to have the spoils and honours of victory reap them. The reward of virtue is within the soul, not in public honours.'

I listened to him until long after midnight. Then I stole out of the house unknown to him. Somehow, the foolish fellow saddened me. I went away in a brown study, and as a result I lost my way, going through a maze of dark alleys which I did not recognise. Presently I discovered that I was followed. I halted, after passing a corner, and waited. I heard steps and then a man appeared, moving stealthily, with a knife in his hand. The night was fairly bright, and he could see me perfectly, even though I was in the shadow of a blank wall. I tried to draw my revolver, but he threw his knife before I could do so. It fortunately missed me. He at once turned and fled, but not quickly enough, for I had the satisfaction of bringing him down with a shot fired at random. I could see nothing of him that could distinguish him in my mind from any other man in the world, except a white patch on

the seat of his trousers. In my excitement, I dropped the revolver and fled.

I did not stop running until I reached the promenade, which was then deserted except for an odd straggler. I walked along the edge of the pier, not caring to run the danger of another meeting with a prowler, since I was now unarmed. I was therefore slightly nervous when I saw a man cross from the far side of the street and hail me. I halted, not knowing what to do.

He came up slowly, a dapper fellow with swaying hips like a woman. He carried an elegant walking-stick, which he wore in the manner of a drum-major wielding his baton. He moved quite like a drum-major, jerking now his head, now his arm, now his hips. When he was close, he saluted me in French. I could see that he was slightly drunk. We began to talk. I had now lost all fear of him, seeing that he was of inferior build and of a nature extremely feminine. He talked at length. He had come from a poker party, where he had had rather bad luck. He was a Frenchman connected with the theatre. Like my friend the Irishman, he claimed to be doing great work for France by influencing public opinion through the theatre, and by spreading knowledge of French culture and literature in the Levant. And finally he ended up with a suggestion that gave me the fellow's measure, and being in no pleasant mood to laugh at advances of this nature, I promptly took him by the shoulder, and pushed him over the pier into the water.

'Good God!' I cried aloud. 'I've drowned him!'

I was on the point of jumping in to save him, when

I saw that he was quite at his ease in the water. In a few strokes he reached the steps that were cut in the wall of the pier, and then walked up, shaking himself. He had lost his hat, but he still carried his cane and his gloves. He looked at me seriously for a few moments. Then he smiled, bowed, and said in a most delicate fashion:

'Je vous remercie, monsieur. Il nous faut toujours des sensations nouvelles. Bonsoir.'

He bowed once more, and walked away, still swaying at the hips like a woman, while the brine water, dripping from his clothes, left a track behind him on the dusty moonlit pier.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DELIRIUM TREMENS

After leaving the Frenchman, I went down towards the docks where our ship lay, with the intention of going aboard, but I found the gates shut. There was nobody about. I walked along the railings, seeking a suitable place to climb, a very difficult matter, as the railings were very high, and the wall completely exposed on the town side. Then I saw a curious sight that made me halt with fright. A man was hanging by the seat of his trousers on a spike of the railing. His body was bent double, just like a dead rabbit that one holds by the centre of the back, his feet and hands being together, and his head between his knees. He was hanging on the dock-side of the railing. There was a concrete post against the railing at the point where he hung. I climbed up with difficulty, and tried to rouse him by shaking him, but without success. He was profoundly asleep, and he snored violently. I meditated. Should I take out my knife and cut him down by slicing his trousers? If I did so, he would fall on his head from a considerable height, and perhaps suffer a fracture. On the other hand, I could not without assistance pull him over the top of the railing to my side.

Just then another seaman came along, also trying to get into the docks. I hailed him. When he approached and saw the plight of the hanging man, he went into hysterics with laughter, which caused him to sit down on the pavement and hold his stomach. Finally I persuaded him to climb up the post and help. Together we pulled the sleeper over the top, and then descended with him. He woke up and attempted to fight us. A long argument followed, and the only way we could think of settling the argument was by going back into the town for another drink. And we stayed in the town drinking for six days.

By then the whole crew of our ship had joined the revelry. Not a man stayed aboard, except the cook, who was unable to drink. The captain had to go ashore and hire a few naval men with guns to round us up. He put us all on a van and drove us down to the ship under guard. Then he put to sea.

I have this only on hearsay, as I don't remember anything of what happened during the last days of my stay in Smyrna. My first memory is of the fo'c'sle. It was in the afternoon. The ship was under way on a calm sea. I looked around. Ross was lying in his bunk opposite me, busy on a job that seemed very mysterious. He kept flicking something off his bedclothes at great speed. I could see nothing on his bedclothes. Now and again he tried to grasp something with both hands. I shouted at him. As soon as he heard my voice, he pulled the bedclothes over his head, and screamed.

Then I myself also grew terrified and covered my head. I had an extraordinary hallucination. Suddenly,

from nowhere, a great sausage appeared before me, standing on end. It opened. A little man stepped forth. The sausage disappeared. The little man spat on his hands. As he did so, a hammer with a long shaft grew out of his hands. He paused, steadied himself, raised the hammer and struck a blow. At once a sausage grew from the spot which the hammer had struck. It grew very slowly, and as it grew the little man and the hammer disappeared. Then the fully grown sausage turned about slowly, opened out, and gave birth to the same little man, who spat on his hands and gave birth to a hammer. And so the droll exercise went on.

It is impossible to explain what agony this caused me, especially the growth of the sausage and the blow struck by the hammer. The growth of the sausage seemed to drag out my entrails into its substance. The blow of the hammer seemed to fall on my skull which it shattered. Until at last, unable to bear the agony, I screamed, and tore the clothes from my face.

When I screamed, Ross became startled, just as I had been when he screamed, and I grew calm while he had his hallucination, watching him with great amazement as he chased his snakes. In the same way he watched me making sausages. But neither could meet the other's eyes.

I have no idea how long this went on, and I have no memory of seeing anybody else in the fo'c'sle.

The next thing I remember is a storm and my recovery. I came back to normal consciousness to find the ship tossing violently, while the wind screamed,

and the sea roared. I was hurled from my bunk to the deck, and shaken violently. I crawled out of the fo'c'sle, and saw a glorious sight, probably the greatest sea I have ever seen; not so great, perhaps, as some of the Atlantic storms off our own island, but greater than them because I was at sea in it. The breakers were passing right over the ship from prow to stern. The ship was making no headway. The men were dashing about in a state of great excitement. In the fo'c'sle alleyway, there was a Maltese fireman lying prostrate, gripping a hook with one hand, and striking his breast with the other hand. He was kissing the religious medals that hung about his neck, and asking God, the Blessed Virgin, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. John the Baptist, and a host of other holy men and women to forgive his sins, and let him into heaven immediately after the sinking of the ship. The captain was on the bridge roaring out orders and curses. The breakers seemed to have a particular grudge against him as they rose up and tried to overwhelm him. But that sturdy Scotchman went on cursing and shouting, utterly indifferent to the sea.

I learned afterwards that the ship was in great danger of foundering, as she was travelling light, without proper ballast in her holds, but I was unaware of this at the time; and in any case, one is not afraid of death at a moment when one is in actual danger of death. One is afraid before danger, and after one has escaped with one's life. At a moment of danger one feels a sort of ecstasy which banishes fear, especially at sea, where the movement and shape of the waves

and the howling of the storm seem to people the elements with giants or demi-gods, whom it is an honour to fight.

I rushed out on deck to help a group of fellows who were battening down a hatch-cover that was being carried away. Somebody yelled at me. I looked behind and saw a monstrous wave rising over the bows. I raced for the mast, and was up it like a cat; only just in time, as the wave came to my neck as I clung to the mast. There I had to stay for ten minutes or more, while wave after wave came over me.

We worked for a couple of hours, and then suddenly the ship put about, and we raced before the storm, or else the storm abated, and we put about. I don't know which. We were running around, setting the ship to rights, when the captain hailed me. I came up to him on the bridge.

He stood before me on widespread legs and said gruffly:

'Were you afraid of the storm, laddie?'

'No, sir.'

'That's a good lad. Take this for your courage.'

He floored me with a smack on the jaw. I got up, and he smacked me again, holding me against the wall of the chart-room and crying as he hit me:

'I'll teach ye to go ashore at Smyrna and get the rats. Take that, you damned impertinent pup. Take that, you drunken little bastard. Have you got enough?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Be off now. Come here.'

I turned back.

'Do you hate me now?'

'No, sir.'

'All right. come along.'

I followed him into his cabin, and he gave me some brandy. Then he very kindly gave me a long lecture on my folly, saying that he was very disappointed with me, that he hoped I would make good as a seaman, and some day command a ship, but that I would end in the gutter if I took to drink and debauchery, and allowed myself to be led astray by rotters and dock-rats. Then he roared at me to get to hell out of his sight, which I did, very contrite and fond of the old fellow.

In the fo'c'sle that evening, I found that the 'sack of Smyrna' had done considerable damage to our crew. Besides the two cases of delirium tremens, there were five cases of venereal disease, one of them being a bad case of syphilis. Furthermore, the lazarette had been looted by the firemen, as far as we could gather, and the captain was so enraged that he logged the whole crew a week's pay; at least so it was said. Also, somebody had stolen several tons of the cargo (which was coal) and sold it to the Jews. Plates had been stolen out of the stokehold and sold. In fact, the whole ship had been rifled. There was a rumour that we were all going to get arrested at Gibraltar.

Next day we arrived at St. Paul's Bay, Malta, and lay there for two days until the storm passed. Then we proceeded to Gibraltar. We stayed there for three days. A doctor came aboard, and had a look at the fellows who were ill. They were allowed to proceed with the

ship, except the man who had syphilis. Ross had by then recovered, and returned to his duties as taciturn and surly as ever.

We were ordered to Montreal from Gibraltar, and set off across the Atlantic, having taken on board further ballast. The crossing was without incident, except that we wandered about in a fog off Newfoundland, and seemed to be in some sort of danger. Then we rounded Cape Race, and steamed down the St. Lawrence. In due course we arrived at Montreal on an afternoon in the beginning of May.

As soon as we arrived, I bade good-bye to my shipmates, and went ashore.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I BECOME A HOBO

I BELIEVE that the life of the mind in certain individuals goes on separately from the life of the body, being influenced only slightly by events, experiences, and environment. I have observed in myself very extraordinary mental habits. Very often when my body is asleep, my mind is busy at work, not in dreams, but in actual constructive work. I once began and finished a short story while I was asleep. When I awoke in the morning I wrote it out at great speed, without ever troubling to think. Sometimes, on the contrary, while I am awake, even walking about, my mind is asleep, and quite unable to make any use of its machinery.

Owing to this irregularity in the machinery of my mind, I am subject to strange freaks of conduct. When my happiness seems secure, my mind, without a moment's notice, and without honest cause, descends into hell and disports itself with the contemplation of such gloomy fantasies that I have to arise and fly. Such a humour possessed me immediately I set foot in Canada. And I can only explain its appearance by a subconscious struggle between my bodily senses and my intellect.

During the previous months, I was becoming rapidly attuned to a brutal life, such as I led on board ship, wandering round the world casually, without purpose, except the immediate and daily purposes of satisfying the physical appetites. I had almost ceased to think. Thinking was becoming a strange and unpleasant process. Shortly I would cease to be capable of individual thought. I would accept shortly the god of my environment, that fluctuating spiritual quality which, like a ventriloquist's dummy, mouths with callous indifference whatever is blown towards its inanimate corporation by its creator. In that position I should feel bestially secure, like a pompous pig, which, sated at its trough, does lie in its own dung, and belch with satisfaction at its swinish state. Such is the state of mind of a man who rejects the divine destiny of man for the mess of pottage of security and acceptance of existing things. It is the swine-born consciousness of all the cowardly mediocrities, be they rich financiers, or florid generals, or sly merchants of eternal bliss, or the horde of slaves, who have one head to a myriad bodies, all those who snarl and spit at beauty, which can only be attained by suffering and fearless disregard for all limits to the gropings of the mind.

What, then, is the divine destiny of man? I am convinced that the divinity in man's destiny is his struggle towards the perfection of his species to a state of godliness, and that the most perfect types of manhood are always in revolt against the limitations of man's nature, his position on the face of the earth, and

his ignorance. Towards the end of remedying these defects in man's structure and powers, *good* men have always struggled, and always shall struggle, to cleanse the blurred compass of man's intellect, that it may make manifest all the degrees of knowledge in the universe. They also strive to keep the race on the march towards perfection in all ways, by moulding new social institutions, new philosophies, new concepts of beauty.

Therefore, when I arrived in Canada, my mind urged me to be *good*. But what should I do? How could I do *good*? There was no tool or weapon to my hand. My mind had but a tongue to pour forth words that lacked subtlety, words written on the air by my body's vapours, dying at their birth and striking with the feebleness of a moth's wings against the inhospitable ears of their hearers.

My helplessness produced a gloom that drove me off to seek the waste places of this wild country, that I might think in solitude.

I set out for the country. Night had fallen before I reached the outskirts of the city. I asked no man the way, as I had no idea where I wanted to go. Nor did it matter where I went, as long as I moved and there was about me the silent harmony of nature and the absence of a city's rowdy tumult. And I saw only one thing in the city, a man fishing in the St. Lawrence. Then there were trees, a road, and mists lying heavy on fields about me, the browsing of cattle, distant calls of birds and beasts; only the sounds and lights of passing motor cars to tell of man's nearness.

Towards midnight, I found myself walking along

the bank of a canal, and I stood against a tree, folded my arms, and looked into the dark water. By then I had walked and thought for nine hours, but of those nine hours I remember nothing except the face of the man fishing on the river's pier in Montreal. Neither was it his face that I saw, but the face I gave him, a mask of the thought that his face, his body, and his occupation aroused in me; a fisherman transposed by a freak of fate across an ocean to a strange place. For a moment I saw his face like that of a dog I once saw in my village. It had stolen a piece of meat, and when cried at, it raised its bloody chaps from the meat and looked, and I saw its look, the brutal, terrified, savage look of a preying beast. Just for a moment. Then its face became a timid mask, and it crawled away, moving on its tail as on a keel. So with that man.

But I have an immense view of my thoughts on the canal bank. As it were, I still am there, standing under the tree, looking into a dark pool. And if I were to be placed in that spot now, alone at night, I should feel terrified, lest I might see there the skeleton of the self I left behind.

So must a man feel who has cut off a limb and buried it in a hole. He has buried all of himself in that place, and for ever more he moves about with a different body, and his whole being changes by the loss of part of itself and establishes an entirely different harmony.

In the same way I tore off something and left it lying under that tree. I know not what. Fear of eternity?

All night I stood, trembling, beneath the tree, contemplating my destiny. Should I still hold with what

remained of the spiritual fetishes of my people or cut adrift completely and stand all my life alone? Alone like the fisherman on the river bank, or howled at like the dog who tried to gobble the bloody meat of knowledge? What horror! What loneliness! No hunger of an empty, food-entreating belly gives such an ache as the coward heart, which cries for comfort in distress. An outcast hermit, who makes a god of thought and eschews all contact with the material empire of this earth, denies its gods, spits on its honours, and turns his cold, loveless eyes from mother, wife, child, friend, compatriot! Such must I become if I must win the empire of the mind which has no limits, whose beauties are unfathomable, eternal since they are not chained to time, and terrifying in their mystery. To use only such smiles and friendly protestations as did the dog, who, fawning, crawled away, in order to disarm the wrath of his pursuers. To contain and nourish within me the germs of all vice as well as virtue, that I might stand beyond good and evil; and therefore be suspect to the instincts of all humble men who bow their knees and turn up their palms in beggary; held in jealous hatred by my kindred; honoured only by those most alien to my nature, since they have nought to fear by contact with it.

I should gain only the cold majesty of beauty, which lies like a cold stone at one's feet by night, preventing the soft, warm hands of sleep from caressing the troubled mind. And I should lose all the sweet joys of humility, except in yearning for them.

When the sun rose, I left the tree by which I had

stood, and walked on extremely comforted, but I kept looking back and wondering. I felt strange, and although exalted by an uncommon madness, there seemed to be something weighing me down and small voices crying out within me, reminding me of the associations of my childhood. Being concerned solely with this inner life, I took no heed of where I was going, and wandered away through lanes. I began to get very hungry.

About seven o'clock in the morning, as I was passing a farm-house, I noticed a peasant running towards me, and waving his arms. I halted. He cried out excitedly in his patois:

'Do you want a job?'

I was intensely surprised at his question, so that I stared at him without replying. His question brought me back to reality after the torments of the night. I did not want work. I had ten dollars in my pocket, which was enough to buy me food for a few weeks. At the same time the strangeness of the man interested me. He looked an uncouth brute, and the manner of his approach was equally strange, asking me to work for him in such a way as if it were really he who wished to work for me.

He also halted a little distance within his gate, possibly afraid or rather too timid to come nearer. I leaned against the gate and looked all round the place. The fellow was lean and extremely dirty, his boots and his trousers being caked with dung and straw. He wore an old waistcoat and a grey shirt that was very patched. His face was sallow and

covered with deep trenches, wrought by care and privation.

His house was made of wood, very shaggy and ugly, having obviously never been repaired or painted since it was built. The surroundings also showed no sign of an interest in beauty by the proprietor, and at a distance I could see outhouses and fields that were equally bleak and depressing.

Then his wife came to the door, a fat woman, barefooted, with her hair about her face, wearing an apron over a dirty black dress.

'Who's that?' she cried, scratching her thigh with one hand, and wiping her mouth with the back of the other.

'A foreigner,' cried her husband.

'Ha!' she said, and then cried out loudly in English: 'Work? You? Here. Good.'

Without speaking, I vaulted over the gate, and advanced towards the house, saying 'Good morning,' to the man as I passed him. He bowed and trotted beside me. The woman wiped her hand on her apron, and offered it to me, which I took. The man followed us into the house, talking excitedly to his wife in French-Canadian patois. Their kitchen, which was their living-room, in the French fashion, was just as dishevelled as the owners. A bare deal table was drawn up in front of the fire. They were having breakfast.

They gave me some omelette, a roll, and coffee, which I ate at great speed, just as they did. Then the woman began to question me, while the husband crushed tobacco leaves, which he brought up from his cellar. Her English was poor, but I could understand it; and

although I understood their French patois moderately well, I pretended to be quite ignorant of its meaning.

In answer to her questions I told her my nationality, and that I was born on a farm and could milk a cow, but that I could not plough. She explained to me that I would receive as wages ten dollars a month, with board and lodgings. I told her that would suit me very well, having no intention of staying even a week in the place. They were greatly overcome by my willingness to work for them at ten dollars a month, and talked to one another in great excitement.

He asked me my name. He told me his own name was Jacques, and that his wife's name was Madeleine. Then we went out into the fields. Although it was as yet only eight o'clock, the unfortunate man had been working for about three hours, having milked the cows and looked to his stables, and done various other chores. He told me I was to cart manure from a dungheap on to a field which lay at a distance near a copse. We harnessed a horse to a large cart. He gave me a fork and told me to get to work, which I did. He himself yoked a pair of horses to a plough, and went off to another field.

I noticed that his manner towards me had changed as soon as he got into his fields. He ceased to be subservient and almost fawning. On the contrary, he became arrogant and spoke to me angrily. At the same time he spoke to his horses in a loving manner, and even when he touched the cart, the harness or the plough there was a tenderness in his face, as if he loved these things. He seemed like one bordering on insanity, by

the fury with which he worked and by the terror with which he regarded the sky, the winds, the temperature, and all things that might affect the growth of his seeds and the prosperity of his chattels.

I began to load my cart with dung. That was extremely unpleasant work at first, as the stench of the dung was too strong for my stomach; also its uncleanness irritated me. It stuck to my shoes, and to the fork I used. I loathe foul and wormy things. But when I had filled the cart and set off, loosely holding the horse by the reins and walking shoulder to shoulder with the brute, I felt content. A sleepy happiness came over me.

The full blaze of the sun now warmed the earth, which gave forth the fragrant perfumes of spring, but I noticed that there were hardly any birds about. And the place gave me pleasure more because it reminded me slightly of home than by virtue of its own beauty. It felt alien, and gradually the feeling that I was in an alien place grew upon me so much that I lost all pleasure in my work. It became a burden to me. The horse looked uncouth. Even the cart was strange, with its enormous wheels. The whole country round about was menacing, with occult properties. I could feel that it was dour, uncultured, unused to the ministrations of man. Its soil had not been made sacred by the feet of men akin to me. I began to think how blasphemous was this toil of mine, spreading dung on the back of this earth, in order that wheat might grow, or fodder for cattle. What was it to me?

I became depressed, and felt extremely sorry that I had been led by curiosity to enter the Frenchman's

house and agree to work for him. At noon the fellow called me to dinner. He looked at all the dung I had carted to the field, and muttered something. Probably he thought I had not brought enough. He was in a bad temper. He made me unyoke the horse and leave the cart in the shed.

We wolfed our food, and then the woman told me in English that I was to help her husband with the ploughing during the afternoon. She told me what I had to do, which was to sit on the plough and make its point go deeper. So I accompanied him to the field, and did as she told me. That was curious and unpleasant work. I sat right under the horse's tail, using my weight to make the plough cut deeper in the earth. It was extraordinary feeling the sharp keel of the plough cutting the earth with a soft sound, and to see the glistening flakes of soil rise on either side.

There is something sacred and sinister in the upturning of the earth, for it brings to mind an image both of death and of growth. Its upturning gives us bread. It also makes room for our corpses. No other form of human labour is so important or so health-giving. Yet I have always loathed it. And as I sat on the Frenchman's plough, while he guided the shafts and urged on his horses, I felt myself transformed into an earth serf, and I could see what brutality of spirit is bred in the earth-serf by his close proximity to the heavy clay, that rises constant to his vision, so that his soul is moulded to its substance, and his limbs are heavy and his speech is slow. His imagination is dark with unsubstantial phantoms, and his crude intelligence

makes all men his foes, all strange ideas abhorrent, all change anathema. The cruelty of the earth, whose immense weight saps his strength and twists his limbs in the effort to tame her and make her fruitful, inspires him with cruelty towards all animate things that are not his property. And even his supposed shrewdness is but the outcome of his fear, which forbids all initiative unless it be tried by countless generations of his ancestors. The earth serf is a boor, uncivilised, a hater of all beauty, the lowest of slaves, the enemy of all gods who are not in his own brute likeness. Truly, the chief aim of civilisation is the destruction of the peasant; or rather his liberation from servitude to the earth.

I worked, riding the plough, until milking time. Then I went to the house for the milk pails and milked. I had on occasion milked a cow, but never more than one. It is extraordinary what muscular energy is required to milk five cows in succession, especially if one is a novice at the job. But it is very pleasant work. It has the beauty of a pastoral poem, and the mind really soars, inspired by the soothing murmur and smell of the frothing milk.

On this occasion I found no great comfort in milking. The cows were restless, feeling clumsy fingers at their teats. They stamped and moved about. They yielded a poor supply, and I injured their teats with my finger nails. I was utterly exhausted when I had finished. When I brought the milk home, the peasant and his wife shook their heads, and wanted to scold me, but they were afraid to do so lest I might leave.

After supper I went to bed in the grain loft on a

most astonishing couch. It was a kind of wooden tub, like a trough. One blanket lay beneath me, and another over me. They were both foul. Full of dust. I was so shocked by the barbarism of the man for giving me such a bed, that I sat down in the wooden trough, and burst out laughing. He looked at me in amazement, and asked me what was the matter. As I continued to laugh, he descended from the loft hurriedly, and I heard him whispering to his wife for a long time. I lay awake thinking for a little while, and then fell sound asleep, just like an earth-serf sleeping among grain.

The peasant awakened me at dawn, and I went out with him to the stables. Having cleaned the stables he helped me to milk the cows, as it was Sunday, and he had no other work to do. The cows were even more restless than the previous evening. Some of their teats were cut. The man got furiously angry, and abused me in his patois at the top of his voice. I smiled and said nothing. I intended to rest that day, since it was Sunday, and I would attract too much attention by wandering along the roads.

After breakfast, he and his wife went off to Mass, leaving me alone at the farm-house. I slept on the verandah of the house until they returned. In the afternoon several other natives came to have a look at me. It is almost impossible to believe how uncivilised these French-Canadian peasants are. I doubt if I have ever met people in any part of the world who have made such a bad impression on me. Nothing is in their favour. The only social achievement they can boast is the fact that they have retained their language.

Personally I fail to see why anybody should wish to deprive them of the wretched thing. Certainly not the English, who are their rivals in Canada for power; because while the French retain their ancient patois they suffer a great deal in the struggle for power and for self-expression in other ways.

Although these people lived within a few miles of Montreal, quite a number of them had never been in that town. Most of them were practically illiterate. They had most extraordinary ideas of Europe, and their connection with their mother country, France, was so vague and remote that they considered a Frenchman born in France as of a different race from themselves.

Only in one respect did I notice their similarity to the French, and that was in their extraordinary hostility to song birds. They were not yet reduced to the condition of the inhabitants of Tarascon, who, having slaughtered all the larks, linnets, robins, swallows, blackbirds and sparrows, had to shoot their caps. But they largely spent their Sundays shooting at little birds. Shortly, I expect, it will be difficult to find a bird in Quebec, unless one wanders in occasionally from the neighbouring British province of Ontario.

I arose at dawn the following morning, and walked away from the farm without bidding the peasant good-bye. I had gone about two miles along the main road when I met another Frenchman. He also halted me, and asked me did I want to work. I was wiser by now, and asked him what he wished to pay me and the nature of the work. He was a contractor, engaged at the moment in making some improvements on an

Englishman's house. I forget what wages he offered me, but they seemed considerable compared to those paid by the peasant. I accepted, and went with him to his house for breakfast. His house was clean, comfortable, and well-ordered. His table was generous, and his wife was a handsome woman. But he had the same expression of shifty avarice in his countenance that the peasant had. He belonged to the hearty, bustling type of human being, the fellow who slaps you on the back, laughs, cracks a joke, utters fine sentiments, and pretends to be without guile, and yet is as cunning as a fox. Hearty men are always dangerous. Happily for the rest of us, they are easy to detect by an occasional gleam in their eyes and by the curious conformation of their mouths.

After breakfast we went to the Englishman's house, which was only a short distance away. He was having a greenhouse built. He received us personally and took a great interest in the work, and was generally very odd. A very lovable man, mild in his manners, always in a brown study, doubtful of speech, and chary of human contact. What the devil he was doing there I could never fathom. I worked there for three days making cement, but I never saw anybody around the Englishman's house except the Englishman himself, and a woman approaching middle age, who appeared to be a cook. She rarely showed herself, and when she did it was furtively, and with an obvious desire for concealment.

He was undoubtedly a man of culture and refinement, but gone to seed. Although I wanted to speak to him

very much, I found no means of doing so. Whenever he made advances and looked at me with interest, suspecting a nature somewhat similar to his own, I retired within a shell, and he turned away. On the other hand, whenever I tried to arouse his interest by examining the flowers and plants which grew in great numbers about his place, he made no response. I can only suppose that he hid himself in that place, among an alien population, for purposes of seclusion, and that he was probably making experiments with plants or with bugs; or indeed nourishing some injury to the spirit, in company with his furtive female. On the other hand, he may after all have been just a dull fellow.

I stayed at a small hotel while working there. When the job was finished, I collected my wages, and took to the road once more. My mood of gloom had passed, and I wanted human companionship, throngs of people, a city. I reached a small town near by, determined to take a train to Montreal, but on second thoughts I decided to walk. I had not gone far when I was overtaken by a man in a motor car. He halted, and asked me where I was going. I told him, and he offered me a lift, which I accepted. The man was very drunk, and the car swayed frightfully. I had then never driven a motor car, so I was rather terrified when he asked me to take the wheel while he drank out of a bottle. I did so, however, and drove straight enough until I came to an angle of the road. Then, not knowing how to wheel the car I drove it straight into a field over a ditch. It bounced wildly, but it was a Ford car, and kept going for about two hundred yards, until the

owner managed to stop it. Instead of being angry, he laughed, and became sober.

'Can't you drive a car?' he said.

'Certainly not,' I answered.

'Very well, then,' he said. 'You come and work for me. I'll give you a good job.'

I could not see the association between my nearly wrecking his car and his wanting to give me a job, but I said nothing. He was the manager of some industrial undertaking. I have no memory of what it was. He treated me to supper when we reached Montreal, and told me to call at his office in the morning. I promised to do so, and bade him good night, but I never went near his office. I did not want that sort of respectable work, as I had no intention of settling down in Canada.

Instead of seeking a lodging, I began to wander around the city, and arrived at the slum quarter. At a street corner I met a wretched young fellow who asked me for a cigarette. He was only about eighteen, and an Englishman. He had come out as a farm labourer, and said that he had worked for six months for a farmer, who fraudulently dismissed him without his wages. He was very bitter about Canada. I could not tell whether he was telling a lie or the truth, but in any case I did not pity him, as he should have more courage. However, I brought him to a restaurant, and gave him his supper. I asked him where he was going to sleep. He said he always spent the night at a free lodging-house called the Brewery Mission. I accompanied him there.

People who have slept at Salvation Army shelters

and dosshouses in this country have no idea of the type of person in the Brewery Mission, Montreal. In these islands, the man who is down and out is definitely a man without force of character, without hope, broken in body and spirit. In Canada and the United States it is quite different. Since there is plenty of opportunity even for the most doubtful character of getting work, the wastrel does not lose his self-confidence, but retains a certain brutal fortitude under the most depressing circumstances. And there is no definite social distinction in the lowest grades of society between a murderer, a robber, or a blackmailer and an honest workman. Social prejudices and traditions are in a plastic state. All grades of society are in a state of transition. Manners are not hereditary. Neither is culture, and there is hardly any tradition. The struggle for self-expression is almost purely physical. For that reason common life is much more interesting and vital, while the highest form of life is at a much lower level than ours. And that is the secret of the attraction that the crude forms of life on the newer continent hold for European youth. Youth, which is always in revolt against its elders, adopts the slang, the music, the dances, and in general the habits of the trans-Atlantic community, which is almost entirely under the domination of youth; for even those who are not young in years across the Atlantic are young in manners.

When I entered the enormous room where I was to sleep I gasped. At first I thought I had entered a film studio where a scene of 'low life' was being 'shot.' The fellows there had the same physical appearance

the same hairy faces, and bare chests, and cut-throat arrogance as bad men in films of wild-western life. What astonished me most was the energy and shamelessness of their eyes. They expressed vitality instead of that utter weariness which one sees in the eyes of the unfortunate at home. They had a malicious cunning and a gay, wanton brutality in them, and at the same time the simplicity of children; a most dangerous quality, for there is no great moral division between a child's severing of a fly's wings and a child-man's severing of a brother's head.

The lights were full on. I sat down on my pallet, and meditated, wondering whether I should strip and try to sleep or not. Several men were already snoring. Others were sitting up in their beds, watching. An enormous man beside me slept quite naked, making sundry noises of a brutish character. He mesmerised me. His body was scarred and pockified, bloated and flabby like a balloon that is three-quarters full. I noticed that although he slept, or pretended to sleep, his hands were quite active. His fists clenched spasmodically. Now and again he stretched out a hand, as if to ward off a blow.

Across the room I saw another man watching me steadily. His face was covered with a growth of hair, which was not shaped like a beard, but was a hairy rash covering his features. Exceedingly bright and nervous eyes peered from this growth, and his two hands, crossed on his chest, were pale and thin like those of a consumptive.

All round the room I saw such people, and I thought:

'Are these my own, normal eyes, that see these men, distorted from the shapes and portraits of kindly beings into dark, rabid ghouls? Or has some ghoul made my own soul darker than the soul of a most brutal murderer, so that an epilepsy of my sight fashions darkness, sin, and bestial ugliness on every face I see?'

And a cold sweat came from my pores with fear that I had descended into hell; such a hell as does encompass the mind of a madman. And then a counter exaltation raised me up, and I saw a beautiful purpose in this vision of human ugliness, such as da Vinci saw, following the carts of doomed men to the gibbets, or Goya gaping at the dead that hung rotting in the noose.

And I said almost aloud:

'Have you forgotten so soon? Henceforth this is your great curse as well as your great happiness, to see the souls of men naked and even the most foul a brother to your soul, which contains it. Bow down, even like the simple peasant, who kisses the bountiful corn-giving earth. For the most criminal of these gives you a rich gift, the substance of beauty.'

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE FACTORY

I STAYED at the dosshouse all night, although I slept none, spending the whole night observing my mates. In the morning I was interviewed by the person in charge, who appeared to be impressed by the fact that I looked cleaner and (in a sense) more innocent than the rest. He asked me did I want work. Naturally, I told him that I did want work, and in order to please the poor old fellow, I gave him a long account of what I intended doing in Canada, by grit, energy, and a proper respect for the moral advantages arising from the accumulation of wealth. He was delighted, and offered me his assistance. But I politely refused, saying I wanted to stand on my own feet. I set out at once for the country.

I had learned from one of the lodgers in this place that it is foolish to follow the roads in Canada for the purpose of getting about the country as roads are scarce. The only way to get about is on trains. He told me how to steal rides on trains and the best place to mount a train outside Montreal. So I tramped off to the place he indicated beyond the city. However, when I arrived there, and waited until a goods-train

came by, I was afraid to board it. It was going very slowly up a gradient, and I could have easily jumped into several open doors of goods-vans, but I could not persuade myself to make the effort. After all, I thought, where do I want to get to?

So I spent the whole morning tramping along the railway tracks, or along the road, whenever it led along the track. At noon I bathed in a stream, picked up a novel that some passenger had thrown from a train window, read, and then fell asleep. I awoke after sunset, ate at a small inn, and continued to tramp through the night.

I tramped for three days in this manner, sleeping during the heat of the day, and tramping during the morning, evening, and night. I was accosted by various farmers who wanted me to work for them, but I always refused. I had had enough of farm labouring. On the afternoon of the third day, I came to the outskirts of a small town, and saw a train halted on a siding in front of a factory building. The town looked pretty in the distance, and so did the factory, with its chimneys, its smoke, and its bustling activity.

Here it is hard to understand why I should say that the factory looked pretty; but on the North American continent the whole spirit of life is in the machine and in the factory. It is that use of machinery which has enabled man suddenly to conquer the wilderness. The whole genius of man is concentrated in the machine and in the factory. Apart from that there is a coarse dullness which is unspeakably monotonous. And for that reason, I felt excited approaching this place, and

when I had reached it, I halted outside the door on the railway track and listened to the whirring of the machines, and the various discordant sounds which mingled in a strange harmony, a harsh symphony, which has been expressed in American music. Although the god of machinery was not conceived on the North American continent, it was there that man first worshipped him to the death of all other gods; and because this god of machinery is more powerful than any god man has yet created, American man shall thereby fill a great rôle in the history of civilisation.

It is a sign of mediocrity to run against the stream of progress, or rather to hide in the shallows while the current goes swirling past, bearing on its frothing waves shouting men who revel in the struggle with nature. Such men only worship the horse and riding thereon when the horse's glory has begun to fade before the motor's power. And sailing ships that are slaves to the wind's fickle moods find rhymers to extol their beauty, when the steamship's powerful womb is belching defiance at the sea and wind, carrying man and his merchandise with greater speed towards his ultimate destiny. So with all the brave tools that man has fashioned, even the rude wooden plough and the tinder to raise fire, they have all met with opposition from the cowardly and the weak and the worshippers of beauty's antichrist. For beauty is power and swiftness, continually reborn into greater power and swiftness, always assuming new and strange forms.

Therefore, this factory, standing on a naked plain, with chimneys shooting black smoke into the sky,

rampant with sound, was more beautiful than the trees and than the fairest flowers that grew about it, and the men there herded working were more beautiful in their humanity than those serfs of the plain, who were still chained to the earth, using ancient tools. So it seemed to me.

'I must get a job here,' I thought, 'and become initiated into the rites of machine worship.'

So I walked into the factory. A man came up to me in the office hall-way, and asked me what did I want. I told him. He told me to wait. In a few minutes he fetched the manager, a brisk American of middle age. The latter looked me up and down, and then said:

'Want to work?'

'Yes.'

'Ready to begin right now?'

'Yes.'

'You're hired.'

That was all. He walked away. A clerk had me signed on the factory staff in about eighty seconds. In three minutes I had my coat off, and I was ready to work for a wage of eighteen dollars a week. Mark you, even then I had only a vague idea what was the purpose of the factory and what manner of article it manufactured. In a factory that does not matter very much, as man is merely a tender of machines therein. It is the machine that makes the articles, and in order to vary their nature he merely changes its teeth and the shape of its body.

It was a condensed milk factory. Boxes full of empty milk tins went up a slide at one end of the building.

They issued from a door in another part of the building, full of tins which had been loaded with condensed milk, which, in turn, had entered in its natural state at the rear of the building. Astonishing! At the exit door railway carriages were waiting to carry the tins of condensed milk to places as remote as Portuguese East Africa, Timbuctoo, and Vladivostok.

My first job was to stand in a row of men and women, passing along the empty tins that came off the slide. These new comrades of mine treated me without any embarrassment, and became friendly at once; their attitude being altogether different from that of peasants to a new-comer. Thus, although they lived in a town that was no larger than a village, and were remote from the ordinary usages of civilisation, contact with machines had given them that ease which is usually associated with life in a city. The miracle of machine industry was constantly being performed before their eyes, so that nothing was really strange to them.

I can never understand why the priests of the old religions, like Christianity and Buddhism, and the others, ever allowed machines to come into existence, for the existence of machines is entirely incompatible with the existence of superstition.

Some of these people with whom I worked were French-Canadians. Others were descended from various British stocks. But in the factory they seemed to have lost their local racial characteristics and had become, as it were, purely human, worshipping the machines instead of worshipping their ancestors and their countries.

Not only do the machines destroy the old gods that lived in the sky, but also those that lived on earth under the names of patriotism and tradition and the family.

Those who decry modern industry also maintain that work in a factory produces in the workman a state of mental torpor owing to the monotony of the labour. This is entirely untrue. The more monotonous the toil, the more incentive there is to thought, as a thinking individual is rarely concerned with the physical labour he has in hand. In a factory there is more association and greater facilities for conversation, the interchange of ideas, and contact with phenomena of character than on a farm, or in any of those so-called 'natural' avocations praised by the reactionaries. And it is a fact that factory workers are always more intelligent than rustic workers.

When the whistle went I was handed over to a French-Canadian, who was to give me board and lodgings at his house. He was a man of fine physique, and had become fairly civilised by working in the factory, where he had a special job that required a certain amount of dexterity. He spoke English well, and indeed, pretended that he was not a French-Canadian. His house was the usual little wooden villa to be met with in that part of the country, exactly like practically every other house in the town, just as the streets were all exactly alike.

I was impressed by the man's wife, the granddaughter of a Scottish immigrant. Even though neither she nor her parents had ever seen Scotland, or held any communication with it, she still spoke Gaelic, and

contained all the virile energies of her race. A most admirable people, the Scotch, when placed in an environment where the brutalities of Calvinism cannot affect them. Except for their addiction to Calvinism, I place them before all other races.

I was very comfortable in this little house. The only other lodger was an Englishman, who worked at the factory as a fireman. We lived as a family. The Scotch housewife ruled us all indiscriminately with equal favour. And when I returned from work in the factory I used to dig in the garden, or perform other chores around the house at her command. That was very nice. The more contact one has with life (I mean the greater is one's alignment with the life of one's society) the better.

At the factory, I performed one job after the other until I had passed right through the building. The manager was intelligent, and therefore never allowed any work-person to remain too long at one type of task, lest boredom might interfere with the efficiency of his labour. As all the tasks were so simple that a child could perform them, each worker could be transferred from one part of the factory to another and set to work there at a moment's notice.

The whole town and the countryside round about took its life and character from the factory. The farmers produced milk to be sold to the factory, and in the town there was no other work except the factory. And the tradesmen also distributed their goods among the factory hands. In that way, a perfectly novel form of society sprang into being, something the world

has not yet experienced. It is difficult to imagine the form of society brought into being by machine industry by looking at an English or American or German industrial city, for in these old towns machines and factories have been imposed inefficiently on pre-existing forms of social activity. But where the town springs up about the factory, a real revolution in human conduct is brought about. Communists boast that Karl Marx is the father of social revolution, or rather of the materialistic attitude towards history and social life in general. But Marx was merely an intelligent observer of the effect produced by the machine on man's attitude towards nature. As I am not a sociologist and have only a vague interest in progress (quite true, in spite of what I wrote yesterday) I shall pass on, leaving my factory.

During the third week of my novitiate as a worshipper of the machine god, I very nearly met with a serious accident. While loading boxes of tinned milk into a goods wagon, a wall of boxes, each weighing (I think) fifty-six pounds, fell and almost buried me under their bulk. A crowd ran to my assistance, thinking I was crushed to a pulp. When they dragged away the pile, I jumped to my feet uninjured, but very angry with the boxes. So that, when the manager came up to ask me kindly if I were injured, I hurled a torrent of abuse at him; not because I thought he was responsible for my mishap, but because I had to vent my anger on somebody. He offered to compensate me for any hurt I had incurred, but I flatly told him to go to the devil, and take his wretched factory there with him.

I insisted on collecting my wages and leaving the place.

Why? If I liked factory life so much as I have stated just now, why did I leave the factory? I also, like Karl Marx, am too lazy to work. That is the truth.

Returning to my lodgings, I sat down and considered what I should do. Then I remembered my brother, and felt that I wanted to see him very much. As he lived in Boston, Massachusetts, I was quite near him. But I did not have enough money to take me to Boston. So I decided to send him a telegram asking for money. I did. On the following day I got a telegram in reply, with an order for fifty dollars. I cashed the order at the post office, bade good-bye to my landlord, and set out for Montreal, with the intention of getting a passport and going to Boston. On reaching Montreal, I went to the office of the American consul, but on arriving there I was taken with a sudden desire to see the Canadian forests, and become a lumber worker, a trapper, or a prospector. This desire affected me so strongly that I left the office and walked about the streets, wondering whether I wanted to see my brother more than I wanted to see the forests.

I could not come to a decision before nightfall and was so exhausted by the effort that I gave way under the strain, so that I dissipated all my factory earnings and my brother's loan, and awoke in the morning practically penniless. I sighed with relief. Now it was utterly impossible for me to go to Boston. I had to go to the forests. Lounging about, I chanced across an

employment bureau, where I saw the most extraordinary notices in the window, saying that men were wanted, in quantities of ten, twenty, fifty, and a hundred to go to all sorts of places, some of them hundreds of miles distant, on all sorts of jobs. The wages and conditions of work were stated in the window as well. I went into the office. A villainous-looking fellow was smoking a cigar behind the office counter. A number of men stood about, apparently on the same errand as myself. I went up to the counter.

'Want a job?' said the cigar smoker.

'Yes.'

'Ready to ship to-day?'

'Yes.'

'I ken ship ye to a railroad job this afternoon. That O.K.?'

'O.K.'

'Right. Bring yer kit along here 'bout two o'clock.'

I picked up a fellow in the office, a man who was going on the same job. He was quite a tiny fellow, half Irish and half French, born in Canada, a blacksmith by trade, and although young he had met with considerable hardship in life. He was typical, as far as I could learn during my short stay in the country, of the young Canadian proletariat. For he had early cut adrift from all connection with his family and place of birth, and spent his time wandering round the country, doing all sorts of things, restless, discontented, greedy for wealth and for adventure.

It seems that the untamed vastness of the country acts like an exciting drug on the senses of the inhabi-

tants; so that the invading population of Europeans, although they came from societies where movement is confined to the fields and roads bordering on their villages, have assimilated the habits of the wandering Indian aboriginals, and of the nomad wolves that prowl at a never-ending trot across the continent, now flying through vast, silent snow-fields, now lurking in unfathomable forests, beneath the summer's torrid heat. There enormous journeys of a thousand miles apiece offer no more terror than a Sunday stroll across the township's commons to a European. Man is still a simple plunderer there. He has formed no castes, and created no indigenous culture. He has had no time to marry the soul of the land he is violating. His spiritual wife is still Europe, and Canada is but a whore with whom he sates his lust.

My friend the blacksmith knew a great deal about the art of wandering about at somebody else's expense. When I told him that I really did not want to work on the railroad, but in the lumber woods, he said that I was in no way committed to this job. When we arrived at our destination I could bolt. But as our luggage was detained until we arrived at our destination it was well to carry nothing of consequence on the train. The usual thing was to buy a suitcase full of rags for a few cents, and send on one's luggage privately to the required destination. As for himself, he had nothing at all, as he had just quarrelled with his wife, and left his home at Trois Rivières. He had intended going to Winnipeg to work once more as a blacksmith.

'I have had tough luck,' he said. 'I gambled in allotments, and made a lot of money in two months. Sixty thousand dollars. Then the bottom fell out of them. Sold out for a couple of thousand. Brandy took that. She told me to get. I got. Ain't going back, either.'

As I had no money, and he had none, I decided to sell my kit to a Jew, which I did, and received four dollars fifty cents. For this sum we got food, cigarettes, and two suitcases packed with rags. In the afternoon we got on the train and set out for a town on Lake Superior. There were two French-Canadians, three Italians, and a young American with us. We arrived at our destination late in the evening, and were received by the foreman of the railway section on which we were to work. A very shabby fate awaited us, for this crude gentleman brought us to a ruined hut, and told us we had to sleep there that night. There were no beds. We had to sleep on straw. When one of the Frenchmen began to growl the crude gentleman doubled up his fists and threatened to thrash us all to within an inch of our lives.

'And look you here, you guys,' he said. 'If any of you sons of bitches tries to beat it, you're goin' to get locked up for an unnatural stretch. Don't forget that.'

He then brought us to a grocery store in the town, and arranged with the proprietors to give us credit. We bought some tea, sugar, sausage, and bread, which we brought back to our ruin, and after much difficulty cooked into a supper. We went to sleep, grumbling savagely. Next morning, shortly after dawn, the crude

gentleman arrived and brought us with him to the section, about a mile and a half outside the town. He showed us our lodgings, a box car that had been fitted with bunks, mattresses, and a blanket apiece. There was a brazier and a few pots and pans for cooking. It is only after experiencing such a mode of life that one understands why the Canadians and Australians made such good soldiers. Their standard of life was much higher in the trenches than at home, and for fear of losing their position in the line and being sent back to their wilderness they fought like wildcats.

Having eaten the remainder of the food we bought on the previous evening, we set to work. Some Italians who worked permanently on the line joined us. It is astonishing how long an Italian is prepared to stay in disgusting surroundings. D. H. Lawrence has observed them in Sicily, entertaining one another for hours with conversation while sitting in privy. The work was interesting enough, replacing sleepers; good exercise for the muscles, and sufficient variation of movement to prevent boredom.

In fact, provided that the company is good, there are few things in life that can compare with labour in the sun with a crowd of men, handling tools, using young strength, testing strong sinews, telling bawdy stories, and laughing foolishly. There are few forms of sport that can compare with it. Although playing football, running races on horseback, rowing, and fighting are, of course, infinitely more exciting and superior in the sense that they bring more to the front

the element of heroism, there is a great peace in the even round of labour and room for the expression of philosophy so dear to man. What I miss now, living this life of cities, consorting with men who are not of my fibre, men roofed and walled with musty memories of other men's adventures, is that man-world, where the blood absorbs each day a good store of life's red passions.

The one drawback of such labour in the present arrangement of society (except perhaps in Russia) is that labourers are slaves, without education or sense of proper social values, without high ambition, without a moral pride in themselves. Such labour should be an apprenticeship, a social service to be performed by all young men before taking up their proper social careers. Instead of the brutalising military service now forced upon youth in many countries, such useful service would go far to improve the physique and morale of the human race by one hundred per cent. That is bound to come. The marvels of machinery are still objects of terror to us men who use them. When we drop our old gods and worship the machine willingly, without reservation, it will free us from bondage to the earth, and from making bond slaves of the majority of our fellows.

For the reason that these men were slaves our evenings were a torture. There was hardly any conversation, except rude discourses about the pleasures of fornication. These men, cut off from society, had a most brutal attitude towards women, seeing in them only vehicles of sexual satisfaction. Ideas were abhorrent

to them. And as the days wore on, even though I was quite friendly towards them during the day's work, at evening time I began to become an arrogant bully, continually ordering them about, insulting them, and seeking opportunities to vent my spleen on them.

I thrashed the young American for having threatened me with a small revolver after I had insulted him. Then I thrashed two of the Italians with a stick. After that, nobody dared say anything in my presence, and they all began to avoid me, so that I had to spend my evenings by the edge of the lake, thinking. Sometimes I swam out into the lake, or took a boat and fished. I was growing into a human animal, coarse in my habits and speech. But the more coarse I became outwardly, the more my mind grew tortured with thought. I was reaching a crisis in my intellectual life.

In my last year at school I had definitely become an 'intellectual,' which means that I sacrificed practically all my bodily energy to the feeding of my mind. During the war I was hurled to the opposite pole by my environment, starving the mind into complete inactivity, in order to maintain the terrific struggle for survival. The aftermath of war left me completely at a loss. My body was numb. My mind was dead, or like a fish fallen from a net. Now my mind had wriggled into activity and with such force that I was being overwhelmed by its furious effort to set in order the chaos caused by the absorption of years of experience. It was like ploughing virgin soil, or taking the lid from a boiling cauldron.

What? Why? How?

Every little fact of existence became a problem of enormous magnitude. The desire for creative energy was so great and many-sided that it annihilated itself. Many youths fight shy of this struggle by becoming decadent, by drinking overmuch or fornicating, or becoming addicted to other active and passive perversions. But I am too ambitious; and for this reason I cannot become decadent. Therefore, the torture was all the greater, because I was hemmed in by an environment that was incompatible with the expression of my peculiar gifts. I did not even know what were my gifts.

My face assumed the scowling darkness and exaltation of my tortured mind, so that, when I went into the town for food supplies and tobacco, people stared after me in the street, much to my annoyance. Especially women. It was about that time that I began to be pursued by women, as if a devil had taken possession of me.

I stayed there a month, simply because I did not know where to go, or how to escape from my extraordinary predicament. Then suddenly I arose, and left the place. I could endure it no longer. I got a train, and went into Toronto, which I left almost immediately, because, although it is a city of considerable size, it is as empty as a desert for anybody seeking food for a hungry mind. I saw in it only a bedraggled caravanserai of shops and factories. It lacked the sinister beauty of the wilderness beyond it, and had as yet gained none of the beauties of culture. An immense garage.

Passing by the docks, I saw a ship billed to leave for Niagara Falls. I decided to visit that famous place, and

I must say it is the only noted place in the world I have deliberately visited. The principal reason I went there was that I wanted to get out of Toronto. When I did see the Falls I found them utterly disappointing. Natural beauty cannot live side by side with circular railways and other gadgets for the transport and amusement of gaping tourists. Having glanced at the Falls I turned away in horror from the railways and pavilions that adorn the locality. I went into the town of Niagara. I stayed for the night at an hotel, and next morning I went to work on a great canal that was being built there. There were some thousands of workmen there, most of them foreigners. I worked for one day and left in the evening.

I returned to Toronto determined to avoid Canadian cities and spectacles in the future, in favour of what is really beautiful in the country, wild forests and tremendous plains.

I found an employment bureau similar to the one at Montreal, and joined a gang *en route* for the lumber woods of Northern Ontario.

In the bureau I met a strange man called John Joseph Peterson, who was destined to travel a long way with me.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE LUMBER WOODS

It is extraordinary how certain individuals exert an influence over one's life. One can know a person for years, live on terms of intimacy with him, consider him as a reliable friend, trust him with one's most intimate confidences, love him as a brother, reverence his opinion, feel in him a mainstay against the depressing terrors of death and sorrow, and yet take nothing from him that is vital, creative or revolutionary. On the other hand, a face seen in the street, a voice heard in a dark room, or a sudden association which lasts a few hours may bring forces into one's life that cause a rebirth of one's personality, more full and more potent than formerly. In that way, I date my literary career from the moment that I met Edward Garnett. I date my interest in human psychology (or rather my insight into it) from the moment I met this extraordinary man, John Joseph Peterson.

He was sitting in the employment bureau, apart from the others, on a wooden bench, with his legs crossed, rolling a cigarette. He wore khaki trousers, and a khaki shirt, and he carried a tweed coat over his shoulder. A slouch hat hung over his forehead. His

face was almost the colour of his trousers. He had three gold teeth in his upper jaw. He was extremely slim and loose-limbed, so that his chin seemed to touch his knees. His face bore an expression of the most utter apathy.

I went over and spoke to him.

'Are you going with this gang to the lumber camp?'

'Yes,' he said. 'Are you?'

'Yes. Are you Canadian?'

'No. I come from Boston. And you?'

We became friends at once.

When men have no property or social encumbrances, they find it much easier to establish intimacies, because there is nothing to lose. So Peterson and myself at once began to tell one another the story of our lives. I had very little to tell, but he had a great deal.

He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, of a Swedish father and an Irish mother. His father deserted his mother when Peterson was about four years of age, or else she got rid of him by refusing to supply him with any more money. Irishwomen in Ireland generally rule their families. Abroad, especially when they marry foreigners, they invariably do so. Humanity has never witnessed beings of stronger character than Irishwomen. Peterson's mother appeared to be a woman whose character was particularly strong, and after her husband's departure she prospered, running a small hotel. But as strong characters are capable of greater passions and more dangerous follies than weak people, she fell a prey to the natural enemy of a woman who has been a short time married and then lives in

loneliness. She took a lover who robbed her of all her money, ruined her, and then deserted her. She died of chagrin when Peterson was fourteen years of age.

By that time he had received a fair education, which, added to his natural sensibilities, made him feel his condition more tragically. So he became imbued with a hatred for society, being cast out into the world penniless, just at the moment when he was beginning to prepare for a career. His first job was a curious one. He became a waiter in a café of the criminal quarter, a place frequented by dope fiends, mainly harlots and thieves. His accounts of these individuals were astonishing.

Later there was a raid on the place, numbers of the thieves and harlots being arrested. Peterson ran away with a circus, toured America with it for two years, and then became a hobo in California. Then he went to the northern Pacific Coast States, and became a lumberjack. He joined the Industrial Workers of the World, became an agitator, and was put in jail. He travelled up and down the country, from coast to coast, taking part in the activities of this romantic organisation as in a holy war, assuming the character of a crusader, so that although he was without family, love, property, or achievement, he was far happier by the full expression of his personality and his enthusiastic belief in his ideal than most men who amass wealth or fame within the narrow and selfish compass of established society.

To me he seemed to move along the strongest stream of human consciousness, to be a strand in a

powerful net that encompassed the globe, a new sort of saint, preaching the cult of a new god, without the repulsive sanctimoniousness of the old Christian saints, balancing the delicate idealism of belief in a higher form of human society with a coarse and sensual materialism.

Here was a new and more attractive exposition of the social struggle. The machine was getting disciples worthy of its powers. Here was no sentimental European socialist, with a panacea for human suffering, long-haired, seedy, mouthing shibboleths, an inverted Christian, a low mongrel, with an inferiority complex, the son of a slave, with a slave's fawning insurrection in his cowardly blood, the lowest pup in the litter of that promiscuous bitch Democracy. He was the type of a new aristocracy that was to spring from the machine, still savage with the excess energy of youth, greater than the feudal aristocracies, whose heraldic signs were lions and leopards and eagles, as the piston-rod of an engine in full blast and the whirring propeller of a racing 'plane are stronger than the lion's paw, and than the eagle's swooping wings.

Eight of us joined a train for Blind River, Northern Ontario. As the train got ready to pull out, we shouted and sang like a crowd going to a football match. Peterson played songs of the lumber woods on a mouth organ. I felt very happy with these fellows. Their profession had traditions and a dialect corresponding to that of sailors. There was among them the same sort of comradeship as exists among sailors. But they had a greater spirit of independence than sailors,

being better fed and better paid and living under a less autocratic rule.

In the morning we left the train at Blind River and boarded a wooden steamer, whose engine was fed with wood blocks. Other groups of lumberjacks joined us on this ship, and there was a large cargo of food supplies and equipment for various camps. It was a glorious day, and the scenery was equal to any I have ever seen by its strange and austere grandeur. I shall never forget my first view of the vast Canadian forests, rising from the lake to the far horizons, all green and radiant in the morning sun, the distant hills illumined, like the cloudy gates of heaven, and the giant pines there standing naked to their peaks, like the spears of ranked angels. From out this interminable labyrinth of trees came the tumult of brute life, the rumbling of beast voices, rising mournfully from the heavy forest silence. This primeval splendour struck the heart with the force of a deep lust, that is born of a sudden vision of glory, or the wild frenzy of battle, when the soldier loses his own individuality in the myriad-limbed army of those that run with him, shouting, upon the foe. The obeisance that one makes to a vision of supreme beauty is a form of death. So a maiden swoons in her first lover's arms.

On this lake I saw Indians for the first time. As the steamer was passing the mouth of a small stream, a canoe, containing three men and a woman, appeared among the reeds. They halted as we passed, and gazed at us with a strange expression on their faces: wonder, hatred, and fear. The history of these American

Indians is the most pathetic episode in the history of man. Their virile bodies and their peculiar qualities of character might have added something very considerable to the human species if Europeans had tried to assimilate them instead of destroying them after corrupting them. But the machine god has no pity. Those who do not rush to serve him are crushed.

Having crossed the lake we reached a landing-place, where we unloaded our steamer, piled the stuff on to a little train, and then helped to haul the train up a steep gradient. When it reached the top of the hill we boarded it, and its little engine puffed merrily across flat country, and then, with a great rattle, down a slope, through a thick forest to another halting-place. Here we ate an enormous meal, the first one I had eaten in the backwoods.

It must be understood that one's appetite becomes utterly bestial in the forest. Men bolt their food, just as wild beasts devour their prey. It consisted mainly of tinned vegetables and dried meat, beans, bacon, moose meat, and bread. Then there was coffee and those pies that dwellers on the North American continent devour at all hours of the day. I should find such food extremely distasteful at the present day. At the same time, I would willingly exchange all the money in the world and the choicest food that money could buy for the hunger of those days.

In the afternoon we marched up to our camp, carrying as much of the supplies on our backs as we could. We arrived at six o'clock, just after the end of the day's work. There were about thirty men in the

camp already. We all had supper together, a meal exactly similar to the one we had eaten at noon. As long as I stayed in the lumber woods I never noticed any difference between the meals. Breakfast, dinner, and supper were exactly alike.

After supper the foreman of the camp gave us our axes, and we went to bed. Our dormitory was a log cabin. Each had to make his own bed, which consisted of spruce twigs arranged with the cut end downwards. A very comfortable bed when one got used to it, though it pricked at first. It was very hot in the cabin, even though the door remained wide open all night; but in the woods, one sleeps in spite of the most stifling heat. Just like an animal; as soon as the eyes close, sleep comes, overpowering, irresistible, without dreams except those vague promptings of the memory, that force a dog to yap and snarl at his fleeing prey.

We were up with the dawn, fed, and marched to the woods. Those of us who were new to the camp went together, and were set to work making a road for the logs to be dragged along to the river, where they lay in a jam until the following spring. That was excellent work, chopping off low branches, and clearing roots, and rubble from the path, throwing brush across streams, and filling puddles with earth and stumps. It was delicious labour for the muscles, swinging the bright axe and listening to its thudding crash against the luscious and sweet-smelling wood. And when a young sapling fell, disjointed near its butt, such a sweet perfume issued from its core as no lady ever could buy in an expensive shop. I often

knelt and smelt these perfumes, and felt invigorated. Pine, birch, spruce, and hemlock, they all had their particular odours, mixed with the soft smells of moss that grew all round. And while we worked making a trail, others felled trees, sawed off the logs and chopped away the branches and dragged the hewn corpses of trees to the rivers, behind heavy-footed horses, so that the forest was loud with the sound of our marauding; rude, vigorous men, slashing these primeval forests, mowing them down, destroying one beauty in order to raise another and greater beauty, the beauty of civilisation.

We had no such end in view. We did not see the foundation stones of cities against the sawed butts of the trees we felled. We only saw our wages, our food, and our sharp, gleaming axes, but with such men as we lies the credit of blazing the way for cities and culture among the many unpeopled forests that man has destroyed, filling bogs and deserts, draining pestilential swamps, making fruitful the untorn earth.

Here, even though we worked with our hands and there was no steam or dynamo or engine, the influence of the machines was manifest. For these logs went direct into factories, there to be turned into planks and furniture and paper by machines. And even though we lived in the heart of the wilderness, remote from cities, we had the psychology of the machine age strong upon us. We were a unit in a great mass, pushing with a great multitude towards the conquest of an unseen enemy, taking part in a battle that is going to bring man to undreamt-of heights of power.

What is great in man on the American continent is this unconscious participation in a great battle. All the clanging, coarse tumult of his life is glorious in spite of its crude brutality, simply it is a battle and the prize is man's conquest of the whole universe.

For three weeks I worked in this camp. The sameness and uniformity of the work allows no particular incidents to stand out in my memory, except my conversations with Peterson and a few excursions I made into the woods beyond the range of our cutting. Peterson always talked about the most beautiful thing in his life, the conversion of man to a belief in the machine age. He did not look at it in that way, and called his belief the social revolution, the liberation of the working-class from wage slavery. But people who are near to a struggle are sentimental about it. They do not see it in its true perspective. The truth is that the working-class have less to do with the introduction of the machine age than any other class in our society. But it is also true that the individuals who are doing most to usher in the worship of the machine age are working men, or those born of working-class families; simply because working men and those born of the working-class are, in modern society, more capable of adapting themselves to new grooves of thought and new adventures. They have nothing to lose. The old gods have only given them chains, ignorance, and hunger.

I also remember setting off one Saturday evening with an Indian and an American to shoot deer. We all carried rifles. The Indian trotted off into the forest,

and we trotted after him, thinking that his enthusiasm for the chase made him take a preliminary run. But he went on trotting like a wolf until we lost him, exhausted. We stayed out all Saturday night and Sunday, and shot only one old stag that was practically useless as food. On Sunday night, he crept silently into the camp, bringing the meat of two fawns in his sack.

One Sunday while wandering through the woods I saw an enormous hedgehog sunning himself at the entrance to his hole. And on the same day, I went with another lumberjack to an island in a boat. There we met an Indian maiden, whom the other lumberjack pursued, seized, and threw down with violence in the brush. She screamed. I turned away. Later he came back, panting, followed by the girl. She tried to get into the boat with us, but he struck her with the oar, and she sat on the bank in silence as we rowed away.

I became as enthusiastic about the social revolution as Peterson himself. We began to do propaganda among the other lumberjacks. The foreman came to hear of this, and one morning, when the crew was setting out to the woods, he called us into his office, and gave each of us a cheque for our wages.

'Now,' he said, 'you two get out of this camp as fast as you can.'

'What's the idea?' said Peterson.

'I want no goddam wobblies about here,' said the foreman.

We shouldered our packs and left. As our propaganda had made no impression on the other lumberjacks, there was nothing else for us to do

except take our packs and go. It was fifty miles to the nearest town, and we had to walk it. There was no train or ship to take sacked Industrial Workers of the World into Blind River. But the journey of fifty miles had no terrors for us. We were young, and we had all our lives to do it in. We set forth singing I.W.W. songs at the tops of our voices, proud in the belief that we were suffering for our cause; although in reality we had both grown tired of the camp, and wanted to go elsewhere.

'In any case,' said Peterson, after we had gone a few miles along the trail, 'the east is no good. Let's hit it out west. That's a man's country. There are only slaves in the east. We'll make a grub-stake in the nickel mines, and then we'll beat it west.

Personally I was utterly indifferent as to where I went, except that having heard so much about the virile qualities of men in Western America I wanted to go and see them. But we had to get to Blind River first, and that proved more difficult than we had expected, for the reason that we walked into a forest fire. This forced us miles out of our way, and made walking more difficult, as the heat was almost unbearable. Very terrifying things, those forest fires. The crashing of the flames, running at great speed from tree to tree, is awesome, like a barrage of heavy guns. It carries everything before it, leaving nothing but a black wilderness, without a solitary blade of grass upon the ground. We cut across its tail, and passed along the bed of a stream that was nearly dry, across country burnt out by the fire. The stumps of the trees and the blackened earth

were still smoking. Clouds of ashes were flying about. There was a great stench of burnt wood. It was a macabre sight, all those stumps of trees, pitch black, sticking from the naked earth, while fallen, half-burnt trees lay like corpses all round. We found several partridges that had been roasted alive. We ate three of them, although they were almost burnt to cinders.

We walked all that day, and far into the night, and except for the partridges and some bilberries we picked, we had nothing to eat. A little after midnight, we came to an open place, and built a fire, and lay about it and slept until dawn. Then we stamped out the fire, and went on. Early in the afternoon, we reached Blind River, having walked about fifty-five miles.

We cashed our cheques at the lumber company's office, and had a meal. Blind River is a wretched town, and we had wretched food there, and every one we saw there looked wretched. I hope I shall never see it again.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE NICKEL MINES

After leaving Blind River I had my first experience of 'jumping a train.' Peterson had told me a great deal about it, and from what he told me I gathered that it was sometimes a very dangerous mode of travel. In this instance it was quite simple. The railway authorities were not very strict about lumberjacks getting back from the woods without paying their fares. We went down to the railway yard, and got into an empty box car of a train that was about to start. We closed the door, and lay still until the train started. When it was clear of the town, we opened the door, sat in the doorway, and smoked and watched the scenery.

'They're not bad around here,' said Peterson. 'This part of the country is quiet. Out west, though, the brakies are sometimes a tough lot. I've seen them shoot hoboes off the trains, beat them with iron bars, and chuck them off and do every damn thing they could to get rid of them. Sometimes they collect a dollar a division for a ride. If a hobo hadn't got a dollar he was thrown off. In districts that the I.W.W. had well organised, most of the brakemen were members, and if a hobo hadn't got his I.W.W. card stamped,

he was thrown off. I've seen some funny things, though. I remember riding an express with another guy from 'Frisco to Los Angeles. We boarded her on the blind side just as she was pulling out of the station. We climbed up between the carriages on to the roof. We lay down, tied ourselves together with our belts, put our packs under our heads, and went to sleep, right on the roof of the train, balanced, ye see, on either side. It was night time, and she was travelling like a son of a bitch. Well! I began to dream that I was chased by wolves, all with their tongues hanging out. Just as they were going to corner me, I yelled, and woke up. I looked around. It was the other guy that had hit me in the ribs. "Cut this belt," he said, "an' jump for it." Why! It was broad daylight, and the train was standing still at Los Angeles station, with a crowd all round, looking up at us hobos, and laughing like hell. There were a couple of bulls, hollering at us to come down. I pulled out my knife, and sliced the belt. We both rolled off, and as I went I grabbed my pack, fell off the train on top of a bull, and brought him to the ground. Another bull trying to grab me fell over us. I was up first and ran for all I was worth, and got away. The other guy was caught, but I had some dough on me, so I stuck around and paid his fine.'

All that evening and far into the night, he told me stories about hobos and their life, how they lived in jungles, and formed community begging, their fights with police, about life in jails, strikes. Then we slept for a while. The train came to a halt. We closed the

door and were afraid to look out. We were at some town, not the one we required. Expecting the train to go on again, we lay down and tried to sleep, but they kept shunting our car all over the yard. Each time it moved we felt glad, but it would suddenly stop with a crash, and a tremendous rattle would go on for nearly a minute as each car bumped into the next. At last all was still. Then morning came, and we decided to leave this train and have breakfast in the town.

There was an hotel opposite the railroad yard. We ate there, and came back to our train. It moved off shortly, and arrived at Sudbury in the afternoon. Here we bought some clothes, got lodgings, and went to bed, after having made inquiries as to whether there was any work in the nickel mines near by.

'We'll make a grub-stake of a hundred bucks apiece at this joint,' said Peterson, when we were in bed. 'Then we'll make tracks for the coast and winter up in California.'

Next morning we went out to Coppertown, where the nickel mines were situated. It looked a most desolate place, a great expanse of rocky, barren land, torn, covered with railways, wagons, huts, heaps of stone. They were building a new smelter there. It looked exactly like a base camp during the war.

A man at the office where workmen were engaged put us through a most odd examination on the question of religion.

'What religion are you?' he said to me.

'None,' I said.

'How do you mean? You must have some religion.

Are you Church of England, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or what?'

'None of these.'

'What then? Plymouth Brethren, Baptist, Quaker, Methodist, or what?'

'None of these.'

'Come on, man. Wake up. What d'ye think? I ain't goin' through the bloody list of religions for you. Are you a Holy Roller or a Cuneyite or a Mormon or what?'

'I don't belong to any Christian sect.'

'None o' that. In Canada, if you're a white man, you must be a Christian.'

'Well! I'm not a Christian. What's going to be done about it?'

'What are you, then?'

'Nothing definite as yet, but I have a strong tendency towards Zoroastrianism.'

'What the hell is that?'

'I have only a very vague idea myself what it is.'

'Are you trying to pull my leg?'

'On the contrary. It's a serious matter for me. I came here, as a matter of fact, to seek revelation.'

'About that?'

'Zoroastrianism.'

'Oh! I thought you were trying to ferret out information about the works.'

'Yes. The works of Zoroaster.'

'Who's Zoroaster? A mine owner?'

'No. I think he was a Persian.'

The man suddenly got furious and yelled:

'If you insist on being whatever you call yourself, have it that way, and be damned to you. Write it down here, and I'll fill out a new column for you. But for Jesus' sake, why don't you let me put you down as a bloody Roman Catholic? They have a column here, and I could stick you in with a bunch of Italians.'

'No,' I said. 'I insist on being a Zoroastrian.'

'Hey,' he said to Peterson, 'is this goddam fool loco?'

'No,' said Peterson quite seriously. 'He ain't loco. He's a Zoroastrian as sure as hell. Ye can put me in with any lot that comes handy.'

'Right,' said the official. 'I got a nice lot of Methodists here. I'll stick you in on their column.'

I was duly registered as a Zoroastrian and we left the office, while the recorder of Christian religions swore mightily at me. We were given our places in a hut, and then told off for work on the new smelter, under the command of a Nova Scotian foreman. This gentleman, a portly fellow who was extremely stupid, owing to being in a state of alcoholic stupor, looked at me for a long time, and then asked me what was my trade.

'A seaman,' I replied.

I had no more right to call myself a seaman than to call myself a follower of Zoroaster, but I find it always amusing to assume strange rôles for myself.

'A seaman,' he said. 'Then you must know a lot about ropes and knots and that sort of thing.'

'What I don't know about ropes and knots,' I replied, 'is not worth knowing.'

'Very well,' he said. 'I'll put you in charge of this scaffolding gang.'

The smelter was being raised like a skyscraper, a huge steel frame, rising to a great height. All over this towering frame of steel men were scattered like flies, perched, some of them, at a great height, swinging iron girders into place with cranes, and striking rivets into the joined frames with a rattle like machine-gun fire. As I followed the Nova Scotian foreman to the place where we were to work, making a scaffolding, I began to feel nervous of the boast I had made, for I know next to nothing about ropes and knots. It would be a dangerous joke to make a defective scaffolding anywhere high up in the building. What was I to do? I decided to go on with it.

Fortunately it was on the ground floor the scaffolding was to be made. But its position was extremely awkward. It had to hang from the roof, or rather, from the girders against which a roof had to be built. It is difficult for me to explain what had to be done, as it puzzled me at the time, and I got into such a muddle that I cannot remember exactly what I did. There was a great deal of shouting and throwing of ropes and tying of extraordinary knots and juggling with planks, a turmoil that lasted for over an hour. By that time, I had all the men except Peterson, whom I was careful to protect, perched in extraordinary positions against the roof, and then I lost courage. Now that they were up there, I had no idea what to do with them or how to get them down. The worst of it was that the fool of a foreman, taking a childish interest in this rope business, got up on the

roof himself, and was clinging like a monkey to a girder. I got into a panic.

'Listen,' I said to Peterson. 'I'm in a fix. Let's run for it.'

Suddenly Peterson burst out laughing. The fellows on the roof really did look comic, tied up in a jumble of ropes and planks.

'Hey,' cried the foreman. 'What's the game?'

'Come on,' I cried. 'Get down, all of you. We'll have to undo all those knots again.'

'How are we going to get down?' they cried, one after the other.

Then they began to swear.

'We better bring a ladder,' I said to Peterson.

We went out to get a ladder, but when we were outside the building, Peterson said:

'I don't like this joint in any case. Let's beat it.'

So we ran back into the hut for our packs, and then stole out of the camp, and back to Sudbury. We went to a small café near the railway station, and had a meal. A great number of hobos were gathered in this café, all waiting for goods trains. Some were going east to Montreal, having come from the west coast. Others were going west, having come from Montreal. Those that were going west denounced the east. Those that were going east denounced the west. One man was following a course from north to south, and from south to north, between Hudson Bay and New Orleans. They all were afflicted with an odd mania that forced them to be continually on the march from one place to another, always following the same course. The man

from the north, now on his way to New Orleans, told me that he had been thirty years on this route, except for the period that the United States were at war with Germany. In order to avoid the possibility of being foolish enough to enlist, he lived with Indians in the Hudson Bay district during that time. He stated proudly that he had never done a day's work since he was eighteen, except for short periods when he was in jail for vagrancy. Like most tramps and commercial travellers, he had an astonishing power of conversation, and he actually persuaded me to give him fifty cents.

Now and again the proprietor of the café, a former hobo, would go to the window and say:

'Two-header going east.'

Or:

'Local pulling out.'

At each announcement, a couple of hobos curtly said good-bye, and moved out with their bundles over their shoulders. Others kept coming in. It was just like the waiting-room in a railway station. The only difference was that these travellers did not pay their fares.

At dusk, Peterson and myself went down to the railway yard to catch a train. We saw a long train, on which were a great number of harvesting machines. Two engines were attached to it, and they were getting ready for the road. It was of enormous length. We walked a long way before we found an empty box. Then we got in, unnoticed as we thought. We were rather surprised, therefore, when a brakeman opened

the door we had shut and told us gruffly to get out. We obeyed, and walked along seeking another chance to get on board. It was now quite dark. Presently a policeman came on suddenly, pointed a gun at us, and told us to put our hands up. I swung around my pack, hit him in the chest, and bowled him over. Then we ran. At the same moment the train got in motion.

'Jump into the first open door you see,' whispered Peterson.

Almost immediately an open door passed us, and Peterson threw in his pack and jumped with great agility. I tried to do likewise, but not being used to it, I missed the platform and fell. I got to my feet, ran as hard as I could, and jumped once more. This time I scrambled aboard with Peterson's help, but I was considerably scratched along my shins. We sat down, panting. Peterson was very much afraid.

'They'll be waiting for us at the next halt,' he said. 'They'll telephone ahead and be waiting for us.'

'Well!' I said. 'What's the odds? Wait till we get to the next halt.'

We kept a sharp look-out until the train slowed down and we saw the lights of a station ahead. Then we jumped off, and hid behind some sidetracked cars to see would there be a search. The train halted, and then we saw several officers coming along, with lamps and clubs, obviously looking for us. They searched the train as well as they could. In the meantime, we sneaked ahead under cover of the trucks, to a point beyond the station where we intended to board the train when it came along. We got on board again

without any trouble. We went to sleep at once, although we had nothing to sleep on but the hard board, and the train kept jolting frightfully. Late the following afternoon we arrived at Port Arthur, a town on the western shores of Lake Superior.

We were extremely hungry, so we went at once to a Chinese eating-house near the docks, where we got a good meal, and engaged beds. Then we went out to have a look at the town. It is of considerable size, being an important port for grain traffic and commerce with the cities on the American side of the lake; but like most Canadian towns it has absolutely nothing of cultural or artistic interest. However, that did not concern us. We had very little money left, and Peterson's foot had developed some sort of a sore which required rest and medical attention. So I had to get a job, and do a week's work before we could get any farther. Fortunately there was a lot of work in the town, especially on the docks.

Next morning I became a dock labourer, while Peterson stayed in bed nursing his foot. The enthusiasm for the I.W.W. which I had imbibed from Peterson soon got me into trouble with the workmen. I found that the idea of social revolution was extremely unpopular with them, which greatly astonished and irritated me, because the work was difficult, and not well paid, considering the strain on the workers. We were unloading a cargo of barbed wire, wheeling it off the ship in barrows. I got sacked after three days, as I refused to stop preaching revolution to the others. The same afternoon I got another job, as a carpenter's

mate, with a gang that was making camps for the Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario. I had to leave the town in order to take this job, so I gave all my money to Peterson, and bade him good-bye, telling him to come along to my job when his foot had got better.

'No,' he said. 'I'll hit it out west. I'll pack up in two days' time and go. Why not stick around for two days, and we'll beat it west together.'

But I refused. I was getting tired of the barbarism of this wandering life, and decided to move back towards civilisation as soon as I got my fare. I could not attune myself to the desolate philosophy of these hoboes, who had no further ambition than satisfying their daily wants, and never thought of the approach of their old age, when their legs could no longer carry them on their senseless journeys. I saw hunger and terrible loneliness lying in wait for their withered bodies, and that corruption of the soul which comes from a lack of discipline, from the absence of a moral code, and from constant starvation of the intellect.

One man that I met in Port Arthur terrified me especially. He was a native of Ulster, and he had been a trapper for thirty years. Living alone in the wilderness for six months each winter, he had almost ceased to be human. His vocabulary had dwindled to a few phrases, and he had lost the desire for speech. I used to watch him as he stood on the street corner, chewing tobacco and staring into the gutter. He would stand thus for two hours without movement. He tried to persuade me to become a trapper with him, and in order to arouse my interest described his life. And what

he prized most about it was that there was nobody to interfere with him. He was perfectly free. But that sort of freedom is awesome. Even a hermit monk in a desert has got his vision of God, and the various delusions of his fanatic brain, to ward off the solemn phantoms of the silent night. These outcasts have nothing but the hallucinations of their brutal lusts, which torture them.

Philosophers, who need most quiet for their meditations, are the greatest proof that man, when sane, vigorous, and in full possession of his faculties, needs to be in a crowd or near a crowd in order to be happy. They always live in cities.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE BACKWOODSMAN'S DAUGHTER

At first there were only four of us on this job, the foreman, two carpenters, and myself. The foreman was a German-American, a squat, powerful fellow, extremely intelligent and energetic, but coarse in his conversation and in his habits. A sensual fellow, with gross ambitions and with an irritating habit of licking his fat lips continually with his tongue. He did everything hurriedly, got excited easily, ate enormous meals, and was already getting quite bald, although he was only thirty-five. His feet were very small, and his hands were very large, with short, bulbous fingers. He used to laugh deep down in his throat at the most surprising moments, when he had received no apparent cause for laughter.

The two carpenters were of quite different character and manner. They were both of Irish origin, and of good breeding. One was nearly seventy, and the other was sixty-four, but like most Irishmen of the lean, gaunt type, they bore their age well, and were still in full possession of all their physical and mental powers. They interested me very much, and I gained a great deal from their company and conversation, especially

as I had mixed for a long time with characters who were without a definite sense of moral or social responsibility.

The elder of the two was called Considine. He wore glasses, and had a pointed, long nose, and a face like an old bird. He always wore a melancholy expression, and argued bitterly on every conceivable subject, no matter how trivial. The younger man was called Doyle. He was florid of complexion, powerfully built, with bright blue eyes and a habit of breathing rapidly, so that one thought he was exhausted. He was always cheerful, philosophical, kind, and taciturn.

We stayed for a fortnight at a little place called Wild Goose, a few miles east of Port Arthur. There we built a small camp of three huts and made a clearing. The work was very interesting. Indeed, there is something refreshing and holy about working with wood. Wood is always clean and sweet-smelling and the sound of the hammer and of the saw is invigorating. Also, as there were only four of us, and we worked together on terms of complete intimacy, without any feeling of master and slave, we all had a personal interest in doing the work well. Then we were joined by three others, and we all moved on to a place whose name I fail to remember. There were only two houses there, a shed by the railway line, used by the local lumber company as a store-room, and a settler's cabin.

The new-comers were two youths who were wandering around Canada in search of experience, and a middle-aged Irishman, of the priestly type, a fellow who was always a little sad, a gentle celibate, of the sort that

remains a child and suffers the contumelies and misfortunes of life with calm, in the conviction that he is going to be rewarded for his sufferings after death. His name was Stokes. The two young Canadians were from Nova Scotia, objectionable youths, with all the sharp cunning of the younger generation of the American continent, greedy of riches, untrustworthy, fond of excitement, without intellect of any kind. While they remained with us they lived apart, and regarded the rest of us with a mixture of contempt and distrust.

On the first night of our arrival at this settlement, we had to sleep in the lumber company's hut, and as it was too late to get our own kitchen working, the foreman decided to ask the settler's wife to cook us a meal at her house. These settlers were also of Irish origin. The husband, who was away at the moment, working as a cook in a lumber camp, had been born in Ireland, by name O'Brien. The wife had been born in Canada of Irish parents. She was very charming, and had a beautiful daughter, with whom I immediately fell in love.

I could not now describe this young girl. I have forgotten the colour of her eyes and of her hair. I do not know whether her face was pale or rosy. My imagination cannot conjure up her figure or any characteristic of her body or manner. Even her voice, which is what one remembers longest of someone that was once loved and then lost, is also vague and indistinct from the voices of others, whom I had met long before I met her. Yet the whole, so to speak, circumference of my meeting with her, and the effect

she had on me is very vivid and exciting; and her memory produces in my soul a definite sadness, which is left behind always by a very beautiful and arresting and spiritual experience.

She was like a young deer, light, gambolling; and like a bird, light of movement, filling the place with the gay sound of her sweet words, which had hardly any meaning or intellectual content, but were just the sounds of youth, virginal cries to attract the eyes and hearts and senses of men to her budding beauty, which was still innocent of the violence of passion. As soon as I entered the house and saw her, I had the extraordinary feeling of having suddenly reached manhood, of comprehending the real tragedy of my sex, which lies in the impossibility ever to completely conquer that shadowy phantom which is the soul of a woman, and yet ever to be compelled to pursue it, unless one forfeits the dignity and pride of manhood, and accepts with resignation those social chains which enable a man to claim a woman as his property.

So does one feel a strange and heavenly drunkenness take possession of one's soul, when on a summer night one wanders by the shore of a dark lake among mountains, and the moonlight suddenly comes creeping from behind the wandering clouds and spreads golden and soft upon the gloomy, shimmering waters, and a little breeze as light as the air set in motion by a waving fan of feathers makes rippling eddies by the shores, and a single bird cries afar off, and the loneliness gets full of singing thoughts that give birth to sore desire.

She was dressed in a suit of overalls. Having been

brought up in the backwoods she lived and dressed practically like a boy, and yet she had lost none of the delicacy of a young girl. Her mother told her to go out and get chickens for the supper. She picked up a rifle, ran out into the yard, and shot down several fowl, with great accuracy, hitting each one shrewdly in the head, so that in a minute there were four or five birds writhing in their death agony on the ground. She ran about, uttering excited cries, picking them up and wringing their necks. Then she returned to the house, with their blood upon her hands. I sat watching her, blushing, unable to speak. She moved about, preening herself before me, and yet taking care not to notice me or look in my direction. When she passed by me, she glanced haughtily at my feet.

When dinner was served, I could hardly eat a morsel, and almost at once I arose, left the house and, going down to the railway track, ran along it for several miles until I was exhausted. Then I wandered back again, feeling all the misery of an adolescent love. I stole into the hut, and hid myself beneath the blankets and pretended to be asleep when the others entered. But I lay awake all night, and listened to their heavy breathing, and thought of the girl and wondered whether she would ever speak, and whether I should tell her that I loved her, and persuade her to come away with me.

In the morning we set to work building the first hut. Shortly after we had begun, the girl came running down from the house to us. She was quite free in her manner, having none of the coy shyness or the subtle

cunning of a girl bred in a town or in a village among peasants. She had just the fresh charm of a young animal, but she was more attractive because of that. She had the vivacity of a bright stream of running water in which sunbeams are playing. The others teased her, and I heard one of the Nova Scotian youths say something coarse under his breath to his mate. That angered me exceedingly. And even though the girl took no notice of me and looked at me almost with a sneer of contempt, I presently dropped a hammer on the Nova Scotian's foot, and when he remonstrated with me a trifle angrily, I told him to get out of my way, that he was a clumsy fool. Being only a youngster he did not accept the challenge.

Shortly afterwards Considine pointed at me and said to the girl:

'See what you have done to him?'

'What?' she said.

Considine winked, and then struck home a nail with great violence. 'Women are devils,' he said bitterly.

The girl looked at me for a moment. Then she suddenly ran away singing. Now all the others knew that I was in love with her, and began to tease me.

'Let him alone,' said Considine. 'Women are a curse. They are born wicked. They are the cause of all the misery in the world. Were it not for women, the human race would long ago be civilised. Without them there would be no priests, no gods, no devils, no poverty, no crime, no death even. Man would long ago have learned how to conquer death.'

At that moment, the conversation ceased, as the foreman urged us on, fearing that the girl might disturb the progress of the job. But at noon, while we were eating, the old man again began to talk about women, God, and social conditions. He was a bitter old socialist, almost an anarchist, with a special hatred of the Christian religion. His remarks irritated Stokes, the religious Irishman. They began to argue with great heat.

I pitied the old man. It was obvious that he also had fallen in love with the girl. There he was, facing his death, without family or relatives to soften the approach of that dread monster, without belief in a God to fortify him against the terror of annihilation, suddenly becoming excited by the vision of this young girl, who feared nothing because her blood had the vigour and potency of youth, and who believed everything because the richness of her beauty did not feel compelled to deny anything outside of herself, since her youth sufficed to conquer everything in her immediate universe. The old man was like an aged crow, which has lost all its feathers and is on the point of death, and has fallen from its tree to the ground through feebleness. With open beak it pecks at the rats that are crawling towards it to devour.

And to my horror I found that I hated the old man and was jealous of him, and felt that his excitement had brought sin and uncleanliness into my passion for the girl. I could have seized him, twisted his head on his neck, and thrown his ragged carcass into the bush.

That evening the girl spoke to me. After we had had supper, I walked up the railway track to be alone. She suddenly ran out of the bush in front of me on the railway. She stood with folded arms, smiling. I stopped dead, flushed, and could not speak.

'Well!' she said. 'Why don't you speak to me? Why do you hate me?'

'I don't hate you,' I said. 'Quite the contrary. But you wouldn't take any notice of me.'

We went on talking in the senseless way that young people talk, when they are fencing with each other's affections. I have quite forgotten what we said or what happened, except that I remember the delicious thrill of standing there with her beside the railway track. She was much more courageous than I, and drew me on until I attempted to take her hand. Then she ran away into the bush singing, and I returned slowly to the hut.

Next day she brought a large cake she had baked for us. That made me very angry, because she gave the cake as a gift to the whole camp, and not to me especially. So that, in the evening, when I met her again, as if by chance, although we both wandered about in order to meet one another, I would not speak to her. I walked past her with my head in the air. Then I went to my bunk and stayed awake most of the night being very miserable.

The affair continued in that state for about ten days, and then one evening, when all the others had gone out hunting, and I lay reading in the hut, she came in and sat down beside me. Then we became friends, and

held hands, and I told her about my life, and she told me about hers. That was very beautiful. When she was going away, she kissed me suddenly on the lips. Three days later, when we were leaving for the next station to make a camp, she wept, and I promised to take her with me to New York when I had earned enough money to pay our fares. Then I went away with a heavy heart.

Although the next station was only five miles away, I never saw the girl again. Every evening after finishing work, I used to walk along the railway track towards her home, but I always turned back half-way. Neither did I write to her, although she sent me three notes. And we kept moving towards the east until we were twenty miles away; and although I still kept awake at night thinking of her, and brooded all day about her, I made no attempt to get in touch with her.

Something larger and more exciting than love was now calling me to the east, and my love for her merely had the effect of bringing this new impulse into life. I knew not what it was. Vaguely, it was a feeling that I must plunge into the deepest and swiftest stream of life, and feel the thronging, struggling horde, with their excited cries, all round me whirling, engaged in battle with the darkness that still enmeshes the human intellect. I was ignorant of what part I should play in this struggle; but I felt the enthusiasm of a recruit who joins an army and does not yet know in what capacity he is to serve. Such a recruit pulls his sweetheart's arms from about his neck, and marches off, with a tear in one eye and a smile in the other.

After six weeks I had saved one hundred dollars. Then I left the camp and took a train to Montreal. At Montreal I took another train to St. John's, New Brunswick. I was moving towards the American frontier.

CHAPTER TWENTY

I GO TO BOSTON

As I had no passport, I knew that I had to sneak across the frontier. I had made inquiries while wandering about, and I was told that the best place to enter the United States was at Calais, Maine; but on arriving at St. John's, I found that I had got very little money left, so I hired myself out to a lumber man that worked a small forest near the frontier, in order to earn enough money for the adventure. It was a curious experience, after coming from the west. There industry of all kinds, even lumber work, had been completely brought under the influence of the machine. The small proprietor had ceased to exist, and the workman had lost all contact with his master. There was no tradition. Hardly anybody worked in the place where he was born. Hardly anybody had a sense of race, of locality, or of family. But here, on the Atlantic coast, I found people who were still in the seventeenth century. The employer was a dour and timid man, whose ancestors had come from Devonshire several centuries before, and who still spoke the Devonshire dialect. Most of his workmen were of the same breed, except for a few French-Canadians, who did not seem to jar so

much here as they did farther west, where they were out of their element. We all ate at the same table, and in the evening, after supper, they sang old English folk-songs. The methods of working the forest were antique, and a great deal of time was wasted in discussion as to what was to be done and in wandering about. It was very pleasant, but it irritated me in my present mood of longing for the great revolutionary struggles of the twentieth century. For I had enlisted myself as a soldier, intellectually, in the war of the machine god against the old, peasant, and feudal gods of whom these men were symbols. When I had earned thirty dollars I left the place.

I had to leave all my kit behind, as I was told it was impossible to bring anything across the little bridge that led from Canada into Calais, Maine. The customs authorities halted and examined anybody carrying luggage, but they allowed pedestrians who carried nothing to pass over unhindered. So I crossed the little bridge one evening a little after dusk.

The weather was already growing very cold, as winter was approaching. It was the month of October. I had no overcoat, so I felt very miserable. Possessing very little executive capacity, I was completely at a loss what to do when I got into Calais. If I went to the railway station and got into a train, I might be arrested, or asked for a passport, because they would recognise my accent as not being American. At least, so I thought. I decided that the best thing to do was to walk out of the town and tramp all night inland. But I had no idea what road led out of the town. At last, after

wandering about in a state of great trepidation, I began to walk along the railway tracks.

Suddenly I was challenged by a policeman or customs officer. I began to run. He fired three shots after me, but without effect. I expect he merely fired into the air in order to terrify me and make me halt. He succeeded in terrifying me, but not in making me halt, for I ran several miles before I slackened my pace into a walk. I was then in the country. I had left the railway, and found a road through a thick wood. I walked on for several hours, and then lit a fire in a clear space, and curled round the fire and slept for an hour or more, until the fire died down and I grew cold. Then I continued to walk until broad daylight.

When I came out of the forest, I found to my disgust that even though I had walked all night away from the Canadian frontier, I was almost as near to it as after I had crossed the bridge at Calais. Right on my left, only half a mile away, was the gulf that divides the two countries at this point, and I saw a fort on an island near by. I expected to meet a policeman, and to get arrested at every step; but I saw nobody for several miles. That part of the country is thinly populated, and houses are rare.

The first house I came to was a country shop. As I was by then very hungry, I risked going in there to buy some food. I saw a man sitting on a box within the door, rolling a cigarette. I nodded to him. He nodded back. I looked around the shop, and saw nobody. So I too stood by the door and began to roll a cigarette. Having nodded, the stranger took no

further notice of me, and I concluded that he also was waiting for the appearance of the shopkeeper. We both lit our cigarettes, smoked them, and then rolled another couple, which we lit. I began to think it very odd that the proprietor of the shop should stay away so long. Just as we were rolling our third cigarette, I said to the stranger:

'The boss of this store is away a long time. Having his breakfast, is he?'

The stranger looked up slowly and without interest. Then he said in the most languid manner possible:

'I guess I'm the boss of this store.'

'Oh!' I said, utterly amazed.

I had heard so much about American efficiency, from Americans who were travelling in Europe, and were indignant about the sloth and inefficiency of Europeans, that I felt sure I was on the wrong side of the border; in fact, I felt certain that this man was a native of New Brunswick, and not American. I forgot all caution in the horror that this thought inspired in me. So I almost shouted at the man:

'Is this the United States?'

It took him five seconds to muster up enough energy to reply.

'Yes,' he said at last. 'What's the matter with it?'

'You are really American?'

'Yes. What you tryin' to get at?'

'Splendid!' I cried.

I felt extremely glad, both at the man's undoubted idiocy, and at the fact that his idiocy was American, and not Canadian; in other words, I was delighted that

I was in the United States. Of course, I can now see how foolish it was of me to expect that every American is a tourist, or of the same type as those tourists who come to Europe and flaunt their contempt for our laziness, dirt, stupidity, and lack of efficiency. Here was a genuine human being, as lazy as myself, as inefficient as myself, much dirtier and much more stupid than myself. Thank goodness, in spite of Henry Ford and the various organisations for creating 'one hundred per cent. Americans,' there are still lazy, idle, stupid, and inefficient people. Just as in Europe.

I looked around the shop and saw that besides tinned stuff, which I cannot eat, and uncooked food, which I had no means of cooking, there were only biscuits and chocolate ready to my hand. So I said to the man:

'Let me have some biscuits, please.'

'Right there,' he said, nodding towards a box of biscuits. Help yourself.'

He never troubled to move. In the same way, without moving, he told me where the chocolate was, and asked me to help myself. I did so.

'What do I owe you?'

He told me in a languid drawl what I owed him and then, in order absolutely to prove himself the laziest man in the world, he told me to take change at the till. I did so, thanked him, and left the shop. Going along the road hurriedly, I munched my biscuits and chocolate. I was afraid to sit down in order to eat in peace; for the reason that I felt sure, if I dallied too long near this

laziest of men, I would certainly become as lazy as he, and never get any farther away from the Canadian frontier.

Otherwise he had a refreshing effect on me. I no longer feared the natives of the country. The American illusion had been killed by him. I now saw that they were a nation of extremely lazy people, playing at being efficient, and that their 'hustle,' which impressed one so much in Europe, was merely a cloak to hide their laziness; and that they kept moving simply through fear that if they sat down they could never persuade themselves to get up again.

Such were my thoughts as I walked along; perfectly ridiculous thoughts, of course, but one must remember that I was extremely young, and that my judgment was extremely unsound.

After another few miles I began to meet people on the road, and they all stared at me, just like European peasants. They resembled European peasants so much by the gaucherie of their manner and attire, and the slow barbarism of their speech, that I again wondered if I really were in America, where I had been given to understand by American tourists and by American journalism that everybody was civilised. I had at the time read none of Mencken's work. Getting tired of being stared at, I turned up a side road, away from the Canadian frontier. As I walked along this road, farmers came from their houses and stared at me. Some of them shouted to ask me whether I wanted work. I indignantly replied that I did not want work. I was offended with these lazy people trying to trap me into

working for them, while they probably sat down and passed rude remarks on my folly.

'No thank you,' I cried out time after time. And then going on, I reflected: 'How like cunning spiders they are. They spin a web of words all over Europe, saying that in the United States the people work day and night, building up a marvellous civilisation, with wheels, dynamos, electric batteries, and steam, with iron and steel and cement and rubber. Thus they all get rich, so rich that shortly they can buy whole countries in Europe as easily (with greater ease) as a European could buy the services of a courtesan. And thus they entice hordes of Europeans like myself to come out and get rich also. But they lie in wait for the Europeans, catch them when they land, and set them to work, while they themselves sit on biscuit-boxes, and roll cigarettes. No thank you. I am having none of it.'

About four hours later, when I was footsore and weary, I saw a train in the distance, going in the direction in which I was travelling. And an hour later still I came to a small railway station. I entered the waiting-room. It was empty. I knocked at the ticket office window. After several minutes of hard knocking, the slide was pushed aside, and a lean man with a jaundiced face stuck out his head. He was chewing tobacco.

'I want a ticket for Bangor,' I said boldly.

He meditated for a few minutes. Then he spat deftly over my shoulder. Then he said in a gloomy voice:

'So you want a ticket for Bangor, do ye?'

'That's right,' I replied.

'O.K.' he said, closing the aperture. Presently he appeared in the waiting-room, putting on his coat. 'You'll have to wait here,' he said, 'until I get the ticket. It's at home. Bangor you want to go to, ain't it?'

'Yes, Bangor,' I said.

'That's right,' he said. 'Bangor. There ain't no hurry anyway. No train pulls out for Bangor before an hour.'

He left me in the waiting-room, and locked the door on me.

'Ha,' I thought. 'I'm caught at last. This stupidity is only a pretence. They are really spiders after all. Now this spider has caught me, locked me in this room. He'll fetch the police. They'll arrest me, put me in jail, and make me work for them. I'm ruined.'

After half an hour the man came back without any police. He gave me my ticket, which he had honestly fetched. I gave him a Canadian five-dollar bill. He looked at me a trifle closely, saw the dust on my clothes, and I knew that he knew that I had crossed the frontier without a passport. But he was too lazy to bother. Instead of doing his duty as a citizen and telling the police about me, he charged me twenty per cent. for changing the Canadian note into American money. I expect he made quite a little income that way, from fellows like myself. He was a very special sort of spider. In other words, he was a decent fellow, like most Americans (in fact, I must admit that if I were not an Irishman, I should like to be an American).

At last the train came along. I got into it. It set

off. It was very slow, one of the slowest trains I have ever travelled on. It just managed to get to Bangor by nightfall. Whether it went any farther I know not. But it certainly looked very tired when I left it. One finds trains in remote parts of Brazil and Ireland like that, but they are rare even in those countries.

At Bangor I jumped out, bought a ticket for Boston, and got into the Boston train, just as it was on the point of leaving. I felt delighted at my cleverness. Now I was quite safe, but very tired. So I put a newspaper on the seat opposite me, put my feet on the newspaper, and prepared to sleep. I had just closed my eyes when a conductor came along, seized me in a ferocious manner by the shoulder, and cried:

'*Hey, you!*'

I jumped to my feet.

'Sit down,' he said in the same ferocious voice. Then he continued in an excruciatingly slow voice, like a judge passing the death sentence: 'Don't you know, you mutt, that you're not allowed to put your feet on train cushions? Eh? Don't do it. Get me?'

I sat down and trembled before him and kept silent. He stared at me for nearly a minute, immensely enjoying the terror he inspired. Then he walked away. I leaned back, and closed my eyes and thought:

'My God! How foolish I was to mistake the others for Americans. This fellow is just as arrogant and fierce as the tourists one meets at home. He is a genuine democrat and republican, a true disciple of the doctrine of 'liberty, equality, fraternity.' He is an official, and democracy thrives on officials. He resembles very

closely his French brothers. In fact, they invented this absence of politeness between them. It is so hard for us others, who are still in the chains of mediæval feudalism, to understand the advantages of the restrictions imposed on human conduct by political freedom and republicanism and democracy. But please God, I shall do my best and learn how to enjoy living in a democratic and free country. One must be very cunning and watch the habits of the country.'

So I opened my eyes again, and watched the others in the carriage. Although it was forbidden to place a newspaper on the opposite seat and to place one's feet on the newspaper, there was no law against spitting or against chewing tobacco, two habits that I find for obscure and decadent (I suppose) reasons, extremely objectionable. Nearly everybody in the carriage chewed tobacco and spat with great energy. It was astonishing with what accuracy they injected their expectoration into spittoons that were often at a considerable distance. For spitting was an art among them, and they often forbore spitting into a spittoon that was near by, preferring to show their skill by spitting into receptacles that were farther distant. They also rejoiced in changing the trajectory, so that sometimes they made curves, sometimes straight lines. In this manner they sometimes wove figures in the smoky air, as rival emissions crossed in their flight.

There was very little conversation, and I was also impressed by the fact that hardly anybody closed his eyes or showed any sign of weariness. They all looked grim, silent, reserved, as if they were embarking on

some desperate adventure, or else so engrossed by the sport of spitting that all their energy was in unique service to the muscles of their jaws. So the night wore on, and dawn approached, and we reached Boston.

Now I felt greatly excited. I was going to see my brother and sisters whom I had not seen for many years. Further, after nearly eighteen months without news of me, except the solitary telegram I sent my brother from Canada, I was going to get into touch with my family.

It was a very odd feeling, a mixture of joy and fear. It makes death more real and imminent to see one's near relations grown old; for brothers and sisters are, as a general rule, only real to us when they are children. In a family, individual character among children is hardly discernible, and the bonds of intimacy are so strong, that all the children are as closely allied and as much of the same being as branches of one tree. With youth and maturity that passes. Each flies out from the parental nest and assumes a complete and separate individuality, often so different as to establish a vigorous hostility against the others. In strong personalities this hostility is more apparent and more common than among weak and mediocre characters. For the instinct of the strong character is to crush what is like itself. The ambitious man never has more than one god, which is himself.

It was six o'clock in the morning when I arrived at my sister's flat in Roxbury. Another sister and my brother shared the flat with her. I roused them, and they were dumbfounded at seeing me. For myself, I

experienced a sort of sacred joy which is very difficult to describe. But as I am incapable of showing my feeling towards those whom I love intimately, they thought me cold. Or else I was afraid to let the ties of family cut across the path of my ambition, as I was by now beginning to see my way towards what I wanted to do, and I knew instinctively that what I was to do would make me an outcast from my people. And when one cuts adrift and prepares to stand alone, one cuts first the most close knot and then unravels the debris.

So in spite of my joy, that day I felt a stranger. Since then I have become more and more a stranger. Now that I stand completely alone, I do not feel sorry. In order to understand clearly one must be logical. In order to be logical one must believe in unity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

I SPEND THE WINTER IN BOSTON

My brother was at that time in the Socialist Movement, so that I was introduced at once into social revolutionary circles. I found the company extremely invigorating intellectually, as socialism in America is practically the same as it is in Europe, an advanced form of Liberalism, and in no way connected with individuals who have the lust for power strong in their blood. They are philosophers rather than revolutionaries. That was very good for me, as I had led a life of action for some years, and my intellect was stagnant for want of exercise.

My brother made me a member of a small circle of Irish and Irish-American social revolutionaries. The circle was called the James Connolly Club. I am a trifle vague now as to what its object was, but I fancy it was out to spread socialism among the Irish in Boston. But it was not very active in that direction, spending most of its time in conversation, debate, and amateur theatricals. Its members were all very interesting and charming people. Most of them were extremely intelligent, though a trifle fanatical. But all intelligent people are fanatical about something or other. Look at

the Jews, the French, and the Irish, the three most intelligent races in the world. They are also the most shrewd races.

Two men in the club were outstanding. One of them was an official in a boot factory in Lynn. The other, as far as I can remember, was a salesman. They both talked perpetually, and always in an interesting fashion, and always about economics, philosophies connected with economic determinism, and ethics connected with the emergence of the machine god in human psychology. I was impelled to read widely in order to understand the source of the great interest brought into their lives by their beliefs. And for a little while I assimilated their enthusiasm and believed in their god. Later I found that their god was only half a god; so I dropped him. I came to the conclusion that there is no possible audience in the United States for the god of humanitarian Socialism. For which I am grateful, as I think he is a despicable fellow.

But one never learns except at an angle; at least, I have never learned otherwise. The reading of Spinoza may help me to understand or appreciate Kant; but it is extremely doubtful whether it will help me to understand or appreciate Spinoza. It is the spirit of scepticism which is so strong in my nature that rouses my mind into activity, by forcing me instinctively to deny outside influences and intellects alien to my own. In this manner, from association with these socialists in Boston, I was enabled to comprehend American capitalism, which the Boston socialists loathed and despised. As American capitalism is the strongest force in the world

to-day, from an economic point of view, and as economics determine man's attitude towards life and towards abstract thought, my study of socialist thought in Boston enabled me to fashion a conception of the universe which I lacked.

I am convinced that it is absolutely necessary for any writer, painter, or sculptor, working in the twentieth century, to make a close study of all social movements that strive, whether consciously or not, to make man aware that the machine god has arrived. Otherwise they are merely copyists of the past. Many writers and painters shrink from this. They find the machine coarse, too noisy, clanging, brutal. They dislike its rigid lines, its lack of feminine grace. They dislike the stains of oil and grease on the clothes of the men that tend it. They dislike the new caste of aristocrats that it has brought into being, the proletariat. They are laggards, fallen behind on the march, whereas the artist must always be in the vanguard. I do not say that the artist must believe. The artist must believe in nothing except his abstract conception of beauty; but he must understand everything within the range of his intellect.

Together with introducing me into these circles, my brother also insisted that I should settle down and assume a definite profession.

'You must become a writer,' he said.

In the United States there is no very clear division between the arts and crafts. Writing, more than any other form of art, is considered mainly as a craft. Facility of expression, an agility like that of a squirrel,

and the impudence of a sparrow are regarded as the highest forms of literary talent, and they are rewarded in a handsome manner. There are, of course, small groups and certain individual writers who struggle against this national conception; but they are mostly alien to the national being, and merely try to graft European ideas on a community that is more foreign, as far as Europe is concerned, than any other community in the world to-day. And they wriggle under the wheels of the machine, crying aloud against it, instead of accepting its godliness and singing of its brutal beauty with epic power.

In order to write one must cease to live actively, and at that time I still wanted a life of action. So I did not want to write. But I had to do something.

'All right,' I said to my brother. 'I'll become a writer. What exactly am I to do?'

'Write short stories,' he said, 'about your experiences.'

He got me a typewriter, and I began to write short stories. I wrote four altogether. They were extremely bad, but in spite of that we offered them to a publishing firm, called, as far as I can remember, 'The Four Seas Company.' I forget what they said about the stories. I expect they laughed. I tried no further.

'There you are,' I said to my brother. 'You see it's impossible to write. I'll do something else.'

He got very angry and said that I should persevere; but instead I went out and found a job on my own account. I became a messenger for the Western Union Telegraph Company. That was an excellent job. I wore a handsome field-grey uniform, with top boots

and overshoes, as we were now in the middle of winter, and the streets were always covered with snow and slush. I was paid eighteen dollars a week, with various other emoluments, which sometimes amounted to about two dollars a day. And the work was extremely healthy. I saw the interior of nearly every important business premises in the centre of the city. I was being continually confronted with opportunities for studying the character of business men and the dangerous nature of their profession; especially men who ran small offices that were not entirely trustworthy; struggling men who were gambling with fortune. I can imagine no life more exciting for a young man than to carry telegrams for a month in an American city.

I stayed at it for only a month, as my sister was continually nagging me about it, saying that it was not a respectable way of earning a living, that it led nowhere, and that I was now getting too old for that sort of tomfoolery.

'Very well,' I said. 'I'll get another sort of job. Now that I have an idea what the character of the business man is like, I shall get a job from a business man.'

So one day I left the Telegraph Company after collecting my wages, and entered a great building where an insurance company had its headquarters. I forced my way into the office of the managing director, and before they could seize me and throw me out, I began to tell him at a great speed the untold advantages that would accrue to the firm from hiring me in an important capacity. At first he was extremely angry, but I went on talking furiously, and presently he began

to smile. Then he laughed outright, struck the table, and said:

'Well! I'm damned.'

'You will be,' I said, 'unless you give me a job.'

'Have a cigar,' he said.

'Thank you,' I replied, 'but I neither drink nor smoke. I have made a vow never to drink or smoke until I am earning fifty thousand dollars a year.'

'You're hired,' he said. 'You can start to-morrow.'

He said I was to get forty dollars a week to begin with, and plenty of opportunity to earn enough money, in the course of time, to enable me to smoke a cigar. I thanked him, and hurried from the office at the same headlong speed with which I had entered it.

'There you are,' I told my sister, when I arrived home. 'You see, I have become a business man. It's quite simple.'

They were all delighted at my enthusiasm, and I spent the whole evening telling them of the enormous fortune I was going to amass in a few years. But next morning I refused to go to the office.

'You see,' I declared, 'the whole merit of this affair lies in my being able to prove to you that I have the ability to procure a job of this sort. To go any further with it would be disgraceful. Making profits corrupts the intellect, darkens the soul, narrows the scope of the understanding, and causes a spiritual disease which makes happiness impossible. Would you condemn me to such a fate, merely for the sake of seeing me grow rich? Surely not.'

My brother then said that my conduct of the affair

with the manager of the insurance company proved to him that I would make a great success as a reporter. So he brought me to see the news editor of a daily paper. But one effort was quite enough for me, and I did not feel inclined to make any impression on the editor. In any case, my instincts must have told me that it was waste of breath trying to make an impression on an editor. The only sane way to approach the average newspaper editor is with a revolver, and one should never hesitate about using the weapon.

My brother then lost all interest in me, and went on with his own business. A few days later I procured a job as an assistant to a lithographic printer. That job only held my attention for a week. I can find nothing to say in its favour. It was very unhealthy, dull, and irritating. The chief printer was the most aggravating man I have ever met. Although his craft was not at all difficult, he had the habit, common to all men of little intelligence, of attaching extreme importance to the slightest detail connected with it. The man of genius is always extravagant, both as regards the fruits of his genius and as regards his property. The man of mediocre talents is always stingy. Women are just like that too. When they are very beautiful they are promiscuous and generous. When they are ugly they are mean, puritanical, and virtuous. I ceased to believe that Flaubert was a genius, after I had read that he threw a cloth over his work-table when visitors arrived. I loathe all mock-artists, like this printer.

I left him after a week, and took a job in a factory for making pastry. Here the work was rather interesting,

and as it was winter, the heat from the ovens was not too great. The workers were of both sexes, and as some of the women were rather good-looking, there was always a tremendous degree of sexual excitement. As a consequence, I noticed that all the men looked bedraggled, pale, and weak. Of course, this may have resulted from the nature of the work, the heat, the sugar, the yeast, and the dough. In fact, all bakers are pale, puffed, and weak. But on the other hand, Gorki gives an account in his Memoirs of his experiences in a bake-shop, the proprietor of which was an extremely abandoned person in his sexual activities. So that, perhaps, the art of baking is responsible for a heightening of the sexual passion. As far as I was concerned, such experiences did not come under my notice, because I was at this period a strong believer in Socialism, and I irritated everybody by preaching Socialism. And when a girl ogled me, I approached her not with protestations of affection, but with extracts from the Socialist Bible. During the lunch hour, I did propaganda among the men, but with no success.

I have never worked in a factory in England. But I can conceive nothing more cowardly or debased than factory workers in a large city in the United States. The fear inspired in them by their employers is astonishing. Perhaps this particular period was responsible for an aggravation of this fear, because revolutionaries were being arrested and deported just then. But from what I have read and heard, the American factory system tends to produce in the labourers all the worst features of the slave mind. The

fact that a great number of them are half-savage peasants from Eastern Europe makes the task of the employers easier. Still, no matter what is the cause, it is all very sad.

It makes one sad, when one thinks of all the joy and of all the power that the machine can bring to man, to see the base uses to which the machine is put by rulers who fear the machine, who do not understand it, who loot the treasure that it makes, and squander this treasure in pleasures that are swinish in their stupidity.

I left this factory before I was sacked. In revolt against the type of human being I saw there, I decided to work on the streets as a navvy. So one morning I dressed myself in several suits of dungarees, and put on three or four pairs of overshoes, ear coverings, and fur-lined gloves, and set out for a street where excavations were about to commence. On arriving there, I saw a number of men standing about. Presently a small lorry came up, on which were picks, shovels, and a foreman to take charge of the work. He jumped off the lorry and cried out:

'Line up all you who want to work.'

Another man on the lorry began to hurl picks and shovels on to the street. I went forward with some others. Several men held back. It was piercingly cold, and there was ice wherever there was a drop of water. The pavements were covered with a rime of frost. I took up a pick and struck the ground with it. The pick rang like a tuning fork. I dropped it at once.

'Hey!' said the foreman.

'Heigho!' I answered. 'Fond of singing, are you?'

I walked away. A man wearing the jacket of an American marine also walked off with me.

'Say,' he said, 'does that guy think a man is going back from the war to a lousy job like that?'

'Sounds rather silly,' I said.

'Yeah!' he said. 'It's work for Wops.'

'Let's go and get a job where it's a little warmer,' I said.

We set off together and came to a factory where they made chocolates. There was a great rattle of machinery inside, and the heat came out from the windows in a heavy vapour.

'This joint looks warm enough,' said the marine. 'Let's go in.'

We went in and were hired at once. We were put to work at different jobs. I stripped to the waist and took off all my overshoes, and most of my pairs of trousers. Even then I felt very hot, just as in the stokehold. It was all like a nightmare. I stood in front of a sort of dumb-waiter, that kept ascending, shelf after shelf. On each shelf there was a tray of biscuits that had just been cooked. I had to take the tray off each shelf, and put it on a moving roller, which carried if off somewhere. For about twenty minutes I kept shifting these trays from the dumb-waiter to the roller. They were scorching hot. On my hands I wore thick leather pads. Then I got bored and changed the movements of my muscles, so that suddenly, leaning forward too much, I scorched my arm against the side of the dumb-waiter.

I began to curse most frightfully. Everybody grew

terrified. I threatened to murder everybody in the establishment. The foreman came running up. Fortunately he was a little, weak man, and he was impressed by my curses. He brought me down to the office, and they gave me seven dollars and fifty cents to go away quietly. They also treated my burn, so that it did not sting any more. In any case, it was very trivial. Really, I was only bored and angry with myself for having allowed myself to be inveigled into having anything more to do with baking.

I went away chuckling. Going into an eating-house, I ordered every sort of biscuit and pastry they had in the place, and ate as much as I could, in order to revenge myself on biscuits and pastries. Then I wandered down to the docks with the intention of getting a ship. Boston was beginning to get on my nerves.

In the United States nothing is easier than to find work. Even if one inserts a notice in a newspaper to the effect that one wishes to accompany a corpse, numbers of old people on the point of death reply at once, to say, for instance, that they are going to die in Boston, and wish their corpses to be accompanied as far as Seattle, Washington. I had not gone far, therefore, when I saw a ship on the point of putting to sea. I approached an officer, and asked him whether his crew was complete. He replied that he still required a donkeyman.

'Are you a donkeyman?' he said.

'Listen,' I said. 'If there is any man in the world that says he is a better donkeyman than I am, I'll knock him down for being the greatest liar that was ever born.'

'Come aboard,' he said with enthusiasm. 'You're the guy I've been looking for.'

'Have I got time to fetch my kit?' I said.

'Where is your kit?'

'In Roxbury.'

'Oh! Hell! You have no time. Say. Take a fast car and get it then.'

I got a taxi, and told the man to drive like the very devil.

'Where to?' said the driver.

'To Galveston, Texas,' I replied. 'I mean to Roxbury.'

He thought I was mad, because I was still wearing all my pairs of dungarees, jerseys, ear coverings, overshoes, and fur-lined gloves. I looked rather like a diver, or like a trapper in the far north. We arrived. I dashed up to my sister, and shouted that I was going to Galveston, Texas. She promptly swooned, this being the last straw in the chain of shocks I had inflicted on her since my arrival. I hurled some things into a portmanteau and ran back to the taxi. We arrived at the wharf just as the ship was being towed out to sea. I yelled, ran along the wharf, and waved my arms. The officer who had hired me, standing on the fo'c'sle head, cupped his hands, and yelled:

'Too late. I hired another donkeyman.'

They just do things like that in America. So I sat down on my portmanteau, and felt very gloomy. Later, I went back to the flat, and said to my brother:

'Listen, my boy. You're a Socialist, but you know nothing about the proletariat. Why not come with

me, and learn something about them. Let's go somewhere and work in a factory. In that way you'll establish contact with the realities of industrial life. You'll get rid of all these fussy philosophies that were manufactured by sedentary Jews, and that are not at all suited to the needs of the twentieth century. Marius could dig a trench as well as any legionary, and all great soldiers were corporals before they became generals. In the same way, if you want to lead a successful revolution, you must begin at the bottom and not at the philosophic top. Come with me. I'll show you. Boston is a sewer which absorbs the dregs of all the cheap intellectual patter of the whole world. It's neither American nor European, but a frowsy old hermaphrodite, still wearing its bloomers down to heel in the manner of the nineteenth century. We'll set out for New York.'

Being at that time a Socialist, my brother was terrified of change, for Socialists are the most conservative people in the world. Notice how they never even change the colour of their neckties. But I finally persuaded him to leave Boston, from which he had not moved for ten years. He has never stopped moving since.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

MORE JOBS

I READ in a newspaper that men were wanted in a factory at some town in Connecticut, to learn how to make rubber tyres. We went to the town. I forget its name, but the university of Yale is near by. We approached the officials of the factory, and I assured the man in charge that both my brother and I were determined to spend the remainder of our lives making rubber tyres, should we be lucky enough to become proficient in the craft. He was very pleased with our enthusiasm, and engaged us. We were put to work on a night-shift.

We found lodgings, and reported that evening at the factory for work. In a great room, there were scores of machines, like small looms, each operated by one workman. An iron wheel, the frame of the tyre, was put on a stand and the various layers of rubber were fixed on this frame by all sorts of devices, which I cannot describe as I did not take much interest in them.

In fact, I discovered that I had struck an easy job, and made the most of the opportunities for idleness and reverie that were afforded me. The position was this. We were being paid twenty-five dollars a week while

learning to make tyres. It did not make any difference how many tyres we made, and nobody seemed to worry about us. The others were working, on the payment by result system, at a tremendous speed. The man working the machine next to mine was supposed to teach me, but as the fool was breaking his heart to earn an extra dollar a night, he paid very little attention to me. Neither did I want him to pay any attention to me. I knew that I had six weeks in which to learn to make tyres before I had to begin on piecework. And six weeks is long enough to work in any one place. So I killed time, thought, and watched the others.

The capitalist who invented the piecework system did a very brilliant thing for capitalism; for no other system can make factory workers give so much of themselves without adequate return. Tell a worker that he can earn as much as he likes, and he will break his heart to earn an extra sixpence, or an extra dime. It never occurs to him that there is a limit to his earning power, and that if he were to work all day and night he can accumulate no more than a mere pittance in the course of his earning life. He is just as greedy as the capitalist, but fortunately for the capitalist he is much more stupid. So he goes chasing after an imaginary bone, with bare fangs, snarling with excess of gluttony, while the capitalist sits down and eats the luscious prey.

I felt a great pleasure watching the other workmen strain every muscle and sinew in their bodies, pouring out their body's sweat by the gallon, shortening their wretched lives by years, corrupting their systems by

constant nearness to the evil smell of rubber, simply because fifty or sixty dollars a week was dangled before their eyes. I feel certain that most of them would open their veins and give a pint of their blood each night for one hundred dollars a week.

I certainly gave none of *my* sweat while I was in that factory. A foreman now and again tried to make me hustle, but I always managed to outwit him. My brother on the other hand was always in hot water. He was bullied by the big Canadian who was detailed to instruct him. Being unused to factories and working men, he was terrified by his environment, and could not ' swing the lead.' No matter how much I warned him against the folly of it, he would insist on doing his best, and, in fact, succeeded in learning how to make a tyre very quickly.

In the early hours of the morning we left the factory, had breakfast at an eating-house, and went to bed. We spent most of the day in our room, as the town consisted entirely of factories and it hurt one's soul to walk through its streets. Sometimes, however, my brother insisted on bringing me for a tour, in order to explain the capitalist system in action. But I had lost all interest in Socialism as soon as I had left Boston.

Generally, my brother wrote letters indoors. I found a complete set of Guy de Maupassant in English, bought for bawdy reasons by our landlord, who had been in Europe with the American army. Reading Maupassant became the only bright thing in my life while we stayed in that most horrifying town. When I had read him right through and was not inspired to

re-read him because the translation was odious, I began to write stories in the same vein. I made four or five attempts, and then gave up the effort. I was dumbfounded by the fact that my stories were unreadable, even though I copied the material and motive, and merely transposed the scene. I came to the conclusion that the art of writing was incomprehensible. Since then I have read the same writer's work from beginning to end, perhaps one hundred times, and I am equally convinced that his art is too great to come within the range of my understanding.

My brother became more and more melancholy, and finally went on strike, demanding our immediate return to Boston. I capitulated, although I made a strong suggestion that we should make our way to San Francisco instead, by stealing rides on trains. That did not appeal to my brother, so we both made our apologies to the factory, collected our wages, and returned to Boston.

But I had sown the seeds of revolt in my brother. He left for New York within a fortnight. A few days later I followed him. There he continued to lead the same sort of revolutionary life of words and societies, and I continued my meteoric career from one job to another.

First of all I became a house porter in the Knickerbocker Hotel. I believe it has now ceased to exist. That I became a house porter after my experiences as a night porter is a proof that experience never teaches. On the contrary, experience only teaches us to despise danger. Except for its menial nature, my job at the

Knickerbocker Hotel was quite pleasant. In fact, this sort of job is the least menial in the United States. Factory workers are much more menial than house servants. Even so, I had to wear a uniform, and to do services in rooms occupied by women. That was unpleasant. There is nothing so galling for a man of spirit as to move at a woman's bidding. When a man tells a woman that he loves her, she at once finds an opportunity for asking him to move on an errand at her bidding. If he obeys her she tells him that she loves him and despises him. If he refuses to obey her, she loves him, and tells him that he does not interest her 'that way.'

There was a great number of us working as house porters. Most of them were casual porters. They were migrants, moving from one job to another. I met very few of the regular type of house porter. So that my companions were more or less interesting as men, and we had quite a good time together. We went about with dusters and vacuum cleaners most of the time. At other times we moved furniture, or carried heavy luggage to people's rooms.

I remember that Caruso the singer was staying at the hotel. We carried a piano into his rooms, and he gave us five dollars. He sang at a banquet. Famous people never interest me, unless they are men interesting because of their personality. Singers, actors, and such people are not interesting because of their personality, but through organic eccentricities. The only impression that Caruso made on me was that he was a little fellow, and that it would be fairly easy to

give him a good hiding. Though I may be wrong. He had a powerful chest.

I committed an act of folly before I left that hotel. I had always wanted to become a waiter just to see what it was like. To me it seems to be the most difficult sort of job, trying to remember everybody's orders, being polite even to the most stupid and ill-bred people, bowing when insulted, smiling when angry, silent when curses are massed in the throat, swollen with rage, always alert. I thought that if I could suffer the contumely of being a waiter, even for one hour, I could endure anything. So I told the manager of my ambition.

'Have you ever been a waiter?' he said suspiciously.

'Oh! Yes!' I said. 'During the war I was a waiter in an officers' mess.'

'What the hell is that?' he said. 'Handing out bully beef tins?'

'Not at all.' I said. 'The mess I waited on always had a seven- or eight-course dinner even in the front line.'

'Well,' he said. 'I don't believe you, but I'll give you a chance. The next Spaniard that gets fired you'll take his place.'

Most of the waiters there were Spaniards or Argentines. I suspect they were all tango dancers, and generally fellows who wanted to sell their good looks to some rich and senseless woman; because they kept leaving, one after the other. Finally I was put on in place of one of them. It was most unpleasant getting into the uniform. Although it is the same as evening

dress, there is a different atmosphere about it. One knows; just as the boatman, carrying passengers across a lake, knows that his oars are different from those carried by a young fellow who is out rowing for pleasure.

I lined up with the other waiters, and a ferocious man looked at me. He was the man in charge of the kitchen and dining-room staff, a brutal man with a flabby face. He pulled me about with unnecessary violence and then, for no reason at all, told me that if I could not look more lively than I looked I had better be dead. We set to work. There were not many people to lunch, so I had time to get used to standing in the dining-room. Then, suddenly, my knees sagged under me, as I was told to take an order from two beautiful young women who had just sat down to a table. I took their order with a trembling hand. And here is another extraordinary fact about the pyschology of a waiter. Although these two young women would probably bore me in a drawing-room, and appear to be just ordinary people, here their presence aroused in me feelings of the most extraordinary envy, lust, anger, and a curious sort of fawning servility. I hurried out to the kitchen with their order.

As I was returning with it, held on a tray in the proper manner, almost on a level with my shoulder, across a marble floor that was very slippery, the individual in charge told me to hurry. I was going as fast as I could without running unnecessary risks. When he told me to hurry I stood still. It enraged me to see that fellow lying in ambush, like the boss of a

circus urging on horses with a whip, obviously a sadist, enjoying the misery he was causing to these unfortunate waiters. Evidently he had once been a waiter himself, and he was venting all the anger, envy, lust, and servility inspired in him by the customers on his successors.

At the best of times I cannot brook being ordered unless it be by a military superior. So instead of moving faster towards the dining-room I came up to the fellow and struck him on the head with the tray. Then I bolted.

I expect there was a tumult, but I got into my own clothes and out of the hotel before I was caught. I had no money because I went away without drawing my wages. Therefore, I had to get another job. I had not gone far when I saw a sign in the window of a small restaurant to the effect that a dishwasher was wanted. I halted and looked at the sign. Nothing can be more preposterous than the profession of dishwashing. I had never been a dishwasher. Why not wash dishes? In those films that describe the fall of a great actor, one sees the fellow at one moment receiving the applause of the mob in the principal theatre of the capital, and a short time afterwards, when drink, women, or vanity have wrought their fell effect, we find him playing in a country booth to an audience of yokels. If waiters were an important section of the community, we might have a film describing the fall of a great waiter. We should see him beginning as a boy in the scullery, learning how to carry enormous dishes, poised in the proper manner. Bowing to his own reflection in some pot that he had polished, he would suddenly dream of

the proud moment when he would bow to a fabulously wealthy Maharajah. Then his ascent would be followed step by step, even to his position by the Maharajah's table. Then comes the Maharajah's daughter, and the unforgivable sin in a waiter, the sin against the holy service. He dared to spill the sauce on her dress in his excitement. His fall would be extremely sudden. And then one would finally see him, staring at a sign like this in a window: 'Dishwasher Wanted.'

I entered the place, interviewed a shy German woman who was the proprietress, and was engaged. I put on an apron, and began to wash the dishes. It was unpleasant work. Unless one is an adept at it, one gets one's hands greasy. The cups, saucers, plates, and dishes, get in the way. The cloths for drying them get dirty and wet. When there is a rush one gets excited and flustered, with the result that the dishes pile up to a great height, and are in constant danger of toppling to the ground.

The restaurant was small. The scullery was a little cupboard. I was continually pushed about by the waitresses that came in to fetch dishes. I can swear with good reason that I never perspired so much in my life. Especially because I wanted to do the work properly, since the proprietress was a kindly woman.

After two days I got used to it, and the work was not so hard. At times there was nothing to do, and one sat in the restaurant. I became friendly with the proprietress. She had a son who had pretensions towards artistic talent. Having persuaded herself that I was a young man of quality, washing dishes for a

wager, or for adventure, she insisted that I should look at her son's drawings, and when I had admired them out of politeness, she pestered me to introduce him into artistic circles. I promised to take him down to Greenwich Village, and introduce him to people I knew there.

Were it not for that I would have stayed quite a while in this restaurant, perhaps a month, or even more. But when I had drawn my first week's wages, I left. I was embarrassed by my promise to take the young German to Greenwich Village. If he had talent, which I suspect he had not, it would do him no good to be introduced to Greenwich Village.

So I went to work for a plumber. That was my last job in New York.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

GREENWICH VILLAGE

NOWADAYS the literary fashion is to denounce 'Bohemian' life. As a general rule, one finds that those who denounce it are themselves exactly what they claim 'Bohemian' life to be; in other words, humbugs. The curse of modern literature is that public opinion demands information from it. Critics judge a novel according to the amount of *exact* information it affords the reader. One hears a critic say: 'Mr. Punce is a great novelist. He must be the greatest living authority on white slavery.' Another man is praised for writing a fine book about bank clerks. Another gains a reputation for 'making the north-east corner of Wiltshire known to the world as Hardy made the Wessex country.' Many a time, in denouncing my own work, some critic has said: 'This is not Ireland.' I have seen a newspaper claim proudly, while denouncing Joyce's *Ulysses*, that Shaw said that the Dublin medical student, in his (Shaw's) days, was not immoral.

In other words, everybody wants exact information. If a writer wants to make a reputation, or to win public applause, he must give the public the information that the public wants. It is the scientific age. Therefore

'Bohemian' life is unpopular with the public. It is irregular. It cannot be classified. If a man is seen wearing long hair, he is said to be a humbug. If he has breakfast at four o'clock in the afternoon, and dinner at six o'clock in the morning, he is a degenerate. If he has two mistresses he is a monster. If he is poor, it means that he has no talent. If the public does not understand his work he is a *poseur*.

Nowadays the public demands that the writer should be like every other sort of business man. He must belong to a golf club, a rowing club, and a bridge club. He must be respectably married, faithful to his wife, and with two or more children, in order to please the public by being as hampered by the idiocies of modern life as the public itself. He must belong either to *The Empire Development League* or to the *Society for the Preservation of the Purity of the Young Person*. He must not be morbid. He must be hearty. If he wants to be really great, he must appear to be more dull and more stupid than the most stupid and the most dull of his readers.

Witness the gross campaign that has been carried on for the past years to vilify the moral character of dead writers like Guy de Maupassant, Tolstoi, Dostoievsky, and others. Every tittle-tattle relating to their sexual life has been dragged out and exposed, and held up to public odium by scoundrels who, while they pose as dull and respectable 'normals,' are themselves, in the secrecy of their own clothes, cesspools of reprehensible vice.

Hypocrisy and mediocrity are in the saddle. All

romance is barred from life, except sottish romance that might appeal to a country parson of the worst sort.

For that reason, no matter how much I might want to expose the idiocy of Greenwich Village, I refrain from doing so, lest I might give the bourgeois the opportunity for saying: 'Ha! There you are. What did I tell you? Bohemian life is just like that.' But, on second thoughts, it is permissible to call it idiotic, because it is not 'Bohemian.' It just tries to be odd and 'wicked.' It is, in fact, bourgeois.

As everybody knows, Greenwich Village is, or was, the artistic quarter of New York. It corresponds to Bloomsbury in London, and to Montparnasse in Paris. But it is much more concentrated, and much more highly organised as an artistic centre than either of them. It has built itself systematically by taking all the more violent features of both London and Paris. The names and manners of its 'dens' are reminiscent of the London of the *Beggar's Opera*. From France it takes all that devilment and abandonment that the world associates with the names of Villon and Baudelaire. From America it takes practically nothing, except the bodies of the young men and women who are the actors and actresses in this extremely serious burlesque. Whatever intelligence there is in the place, whatever talent, poverty, honest libertinism and morbid fear of convention and the restrictions of civilisation, comes from individuals who live on the mummers and hide themselves as much as possible.

Personally, I liked this quarter better than anywhere else in New York, because I was young and I had

never seen anything like it. And there is a little square near by called Washington Square, where it was very pleasant to sit and think. There was also a woman with whom I fell in love.

One evening while I was sitting with my brother and some others in a restaurant frequented by Communists, I noticed an extremely pretty woman enter alone. She was wearing a very large hat, whose brim extended a little farther than the tip of her shoulder on either side. She herself was small, very fair, 'with a face like a kitten,' as Chekhov was fond of describing this particular type. Seeing me look at her in admiration, one of the Communists who were with my brother turned to me, and said, with the damnable air of superiority affected by all communists:

'No use your looking at her. I have tried to pick her up several times.'

That incited me to compel her to take notice of me. So that, when her eyes chanced to come my way, I smiled at her. Her eyes smiled in return, and I was so moved by her beauty that I turned away and blushed. Later she asked the waiter to fetch me to her table. I came awkwardly, and sat down beside her. Never having been in the company of a woman like her, my youth and ignorance weighed heavily on me, and I did not know what to say. In answer to her first remarks, I mumbled something extremely foolish and almost inarticulate.

She told me her name and her nationality, which was Russian. I told her my name and nationality. Then she said with the insincerity of a civilised person:

'Oh! how I admire the Irish and their struggle for freedom. Like the Poles, they are a race to be admired and pitied.'

Although I find much to admire in my own race, I find nothing that is to be pitied, since it is one of the few races to-day that are growing, and at the beginning of their creative careers. To be compared with the Poles irritated me; but I could see that she spoke merely out of politeness and in order to put me at my ease. I was conscious of the others watching us, and I could not become comfortable. Then she understood my embarrassment, and decided to treat me as a youth, with a great deal of freedom and patronage. Her voice was so cultured and exquisite in tone, her manner of speech was so subtle and her beauty was so delicately refined, that I was completely carried away, and ceased to take any interest in the matter under discussion or in our surroundings.

Suddenly, while we were having coffee, she took a little stick, about four inches long, from her bag, and showed it to me.

'I got this in Tokio,' she said.

'What is it?' I said.

'It is supposed to be a charm,' she said. 'If I wave it in front of your eyes and utter certain words, you will fall in love with me.'

'But surely this charm is not necessary,' I said. 'I have already done so.'

'Ah!' she said. 'Then you are not so young.'

'In that respect,' I replied, 'an Irishman is never young. Love with us is principally a ritual of speech.

But in my present case it has gone farther than my tongue. In fact, it has descended to my heart. But still, in order to please you, I beg of you to charm me with this pretty stick.'

'I see,' she said, 'my little stick has one effect. It loosened your tongue. Well! Will you love me for ten days?'

And she began to pass the little stick back and forth before my eyes. It certainly had an extraordinary effect on me, but more because of the intense way in which she looked at me than because of any particular quality in the stick.

'But why for ten days?' I said.

'Ah!' she said. 'To place a definite limit to the duration of a certain passion makes it all the more intense.'

'I suppose that is true,' I said. 'In America, criminals are given chicken before they are taken to the electric chair, and a cigarette too. But I am not a criminal. In fact, I have had only one experience of love, which was in no wise exhausting. Why should it be necessary for me, who am still untouched, to have artificial means for intensifying the passions?'

'Later,' she said, 'I will explain to you. Come. Let us go to my apartment.'

She lived near the top of an apartment house in Washington Square. I cannot describe how romantic it all appeared to me, meeting this beautiful foreigner in a café in Greenwich Village, and then going with her to her rooms. It was just like a story written by a romantic writer of the latter half of the nineteenth

century, except that it was more exciting, being felt and not read.

'I am very poor,' she said, showing me her room. 'See. It is more comfortable if we sit on the bed. But I can see the trees through my window. Look. One can almost forget that it is New York. Sometimes I even hear the birds sing. It is so sad, being away from Russia, and being poor.'

She told me that she was a Russian émigrée. Although she had been some sort of a social revolutionary, and had in fact been in jail during the revolution of 1905, she was opposed to the Bolsheviks, and had to fly the country when they came into power. I listened to her talk for several hours, and I was enchanted.

Intellectually, the Russians of the end of Tsarism were several generations ahead of the rest of Europe. Even a French intellectual appears crude compared to a Russian of the same class and type. In general, all Russians seem to possess genius when compared with western Europeans. And Maria was a woman of extraordinary ability. In Russia she claimed to be quite well known as a poet. In America she was earning her living as a writer of short stories. I was appalled at my own ignorance while listening to her. She even told me about Irish writers with whom I was unacquainted. I listened and marvelled at her.

'And you, too, are a writer?' she asked.

'No,' I said. 'I'm a house porter at the Knickerbocker Hotel.'

'Ah! How romantic!'

'On the contrary,' I said. 'It's unspeakably dull to work for a living.'

'But you are not a house porter, really. You are a prince in disguise.'

'The only princely thing I possess is my name. I have no money, so I must be a house porter or starve.'

She refused to believe that I was not a prince in disguise, and examined my cuff-links, searching for some trace of the outward show of nobility. But she found nothing, and was a trifle disappointed; especially as I began, rather in self-defence, to defend the Communist régime in Russia.

She began to play with me like a cat, that has caught a mouse, and ill-treats it before it devours it. Instead of killing it with its teeth, it terrifies the life out of it. She was about thirty-four, and I was twenty-four. I was five years younger than a man of twenty-four, because I had led a barbarous life since I had joined the army. Mentally I had remained at a standstill. Whereas she had lived the life of the intellect from the age of sixteen. I was like a cumbersome bear playing with a wildcat.

Everything about her was odd. In order to excite me she told me about the life of debauchery in Petrograd before the war, and then suddenly she pointed to a rosary beads on the wall.

'I'm not orthodox. I'm Roman Catholic.'

Tears came into her eyes, and she said:

'That is the only thing that saves me, my religion. It is my only consolation.'

I never believe a woman, but I always accept as

truth whatever they say. But I could not understand this woman. She was much too subtle for me. I could not tell whether she was telling the truth or not. I could not understand what she wanted with me. Neither did I know what I wanted with her. But she acted on me mentally like an explosive.

At midnight I kissed her hand, and went away utterly stupefied with love. Next evening when I came to her room she treated me coldly. She said she was ill. Somebody had been cruel to her. Would I sit with her and be silent? For several hours I lay beside her on the bed. She lay on her back with closed eyes, and never spoke. Suddenly she sat up and said:

'Why don't you love me? Why are you cruel to me?'

I moved to embrace her, but she jumped off the bed and said with great violence:

'No. Not like a pig.'

I trembled and remained silent. She went out of the room, and I waited for about twenty minutes in agony. Then she came back laughing, and said:

'Forgive me. I was sad because you did not bring me flowers. Come. Take me out somewhere. If you are a workman, I want to be a workman's sweetheart. We'll go to a Chinese restaurant, and if somebody looks at me perhaps you shall fight him. Eh?'

'All right,' I said. 'Let's go out.'

Going along the street, she said:

'I knew another Irishman here. He was very beautiful. He was a thief. Now he is in jail.'

We entered a Chinese restaurant. When we were seated, she said:

'I said we were to love for ten days because I am going to the West Indies after ten days. I wish you were rich so that I could go with you, because I'd rather go with you than with him.'

My humiliation was complete when I could not pay for the meal, and she had to pay for it. I left her in silence at the door of her lodgings, and walked about the streets for a long time. I swore that I would never again go to see her. But next evening I could not resist going back. That evening she was in good spirits, and we lay on the bed for the whole evening until after midnight talking about literature. We kissed, and to my amazement I found that her lips left me quite cold. There was something strange about her that I could not understand. She was my superior in intellect, and I could not love her because of that. I can only love a woman whom I can master. If a woman holds something back I remain hostile to her. I can humble myself before her, and surrender myself only if she is the first to surrender.

But because the mystery in her forbade physical intimacy, she became all the more romantic. For those ten days I went about as in a dream. The whole of New York was transformed in my mind. We were now in the beginning of summer, and the heat was excessive. But that did not matter. The city was a fairyland. Every night I lay and listened to her talk, and I swore that in order to become like her, in order to be able to conquer women like her, I would rouse myself from my lethargy, give up this life of aimless wandering, and become civilised once more.

Then came the last night. She was going away in the morning to the Barbadoes. I believe she was really moved that night, and that she was no longer playing, enjoying a perverse adventure with a young boy. She was moved to desire something deep and beautiful, but I was unable to arouse it in her. In any case, I doubt if she was capable of seizing it and retaining it if it came. She was already too old; not because of her years, but because she belonged to something that had passed away; something effete that had been overthrown and twisted in the dust by something young and vital and brutal like myself. She did not believe, and she lived among phantoms of the imagination, seeing the reality around her only as a dim and blurred image of something quite different, which she had once known and then lost.

But how beautiful she was in my eyes! How soft and tender and refined! How exquisite, like a shining ball of sea foam, in which there are jewels fashioned by the reflection of the sun, and which vanishes when touched, into a few dull drops of brine! Her feet, her hands, her eyes, her lips, her hair, her movements, her voice, were fabulous in the turbulent effect they had on my senses, like a woman in a fairy story from the East, capable of inspiring madness, death, supreme joy, and sudden disaster. And as I held her in my arms that night, and stared at her tear-stained eyes, I felt weak, almost to the point of death, for I knew that this was something that had come to me, when I was unready, and that it would never come again in its entirety, and that I was going to lose it.

Or indeed, did it come in another form, and was it inevitable that it should come in another form? Not contained in the body of a woman, in a single being, but in the world of the imagination, fleeting, unattainable, of my own creation?

I reeled from her door, and sat on a bench all night in Battery Park. Her ship went out in the morning to Barbadoes, whence she sent me a dried rose two months later. I never wrote to her, and I have never heard of her since.

I have forgotten her name.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

I LEAVE NEW YORK

After she had gone from New York I could no longer stay there. Just as her presence and my love for her had urged me to surrender the life of the road, and to become civilised, ambitious, working towards an objective worthy of public esteem, her departure hurled me back into the state of social cynicism in which she had found me.

That day I went down into the Bowery of New York, and signed on with a gang that was going to work on oyster boats off Long Island. I felt quite numb, and utterly indifferent as to what I did. There was a young Irishman with me in the gang. The others were from Central Europe. We took a train to a town at the far end of Long Island, and went on board a small ship. We put to sea, not far, but out into the harbour, where the oyster beds lay.

That was very curious work. We dragged the oyster shells from one place, and threw them down in another place. The work was quite hard, and the skipper was a hard task-master. I took positively no interest in the shells, in the skipper, or in the ship. I was still dazed. She had given me a Russian grammar in order that

I might learn Russian. And I worked steadily at the grammar, not in the hope of ever being able to speak to her in that language, but simply in order to occupy my mind with something difficult, until it should recover its balance.

After a few days the skipper noticed that I always carried the grammar about with me, and studied it at every available opportunity. Finally he asked me what it was.

'It's a Russian grammar,' I said.

'Hey!' he said. 'What are you learning Russian for?'

'Just to amuse myself.'

'Like hell you are. I bet you're a Bolshevik.'

I had forgotten about Bolshevism, but I found it odd that he thought that I was a Bolshevik because I was learning Russian through being in love with a woman who had been expelled by the Bolsheviks. Although, in reality, there was no fundamental difference between an educated Russian who was a Bolshevik and one who was an anti-Bolshevik. A revolution is but poorly understood in its intellectual content. And the Russian revolution especially has been understood in its entirety by nobody except by Dostoievsky, who died long before it came to pass. For, in order to clearly understand it, one must look upon it as the upheaval of a great people, pregnant with creative power, and spreading out over the whole earth, like a lava tide, which scatters the force of its being far and wide, until the whole of humanity is infected by the germ of its peculiar greatness. Here Russian culture, in its many forms, is propagated by exiled nobles, by intellectuals,

and by servants of the fallen Government, who gain access to those grooves in European society that are similar to themselves. There the Russian peasant and workman, now risen to power, gains an audience, among the toiling masses of the world, for new political experiments which the genius, the courage, and the energy of the Russian race make possible. And although these two streams appear to be mutually contradictory, they are really part of the same being, and they both serve the same purpose of liberating the dynamic force of Russia. Just so, Dostoievsky prophesied in *The Idiot.*

But because the captain was angry, and I did not like him, simply because he was an unsympathetic human being for my present frame of mind, I answered that I was a Bolshevik.

'All right,' he said. 'The sooner you leave this job the better for your health.'

'We'll see about that,' I said.

We were working ten hours a day for sixty dollars a month and our board. That evening I harangued the crew in the fo'c'sle after we had finished work. Using all the eloquence I possessed, I persuaded them that we should get seventy-five dollars a month for an eight-hour day. Their cupidity made their ears attentive to my arguments. With the help of the other Irishman I forced them to go on strike next morning. I then went to the captain, and issued my ultimatum. After four hours he had to agree. Then we went back to work.

But the next day we put ashore at the little town. He

went into the town and returned with two policemen. The Irishman and myself were thrown off the ship. I called on the Central Europeans to leave the ship also, but they were afraid to do so; with the result that they put to sea once more, working ten hours a day for sixty dollars a month. We collected our wages, and returned to New York.

There I left the Irishman and signed on, the same day, with another gang that was making a railhead in Connecticut. There were about three thousand men on that job. They all lived in a camp out in the country. The Italian who had contracted to feed the camp interviewed me on my arrival, and asked me whether I would like to work under him.

'I don't mind,' I said. 'But I know nothing about cooking.'

'That's all right,' he said. 'You don't have to cook. You'll just have to hand out the grub, and do a little washing up, and . . .'

'And what?'

'Well,' he said. 'It's this way. You're pretty fit, ain't you?'

'I feel all right,' I said.

'There are rough guys among this bunch here,' he said. 'You got to keep them in order if they try to kick up a dust.'

'I don't mind what I do,' I said. 'What do I get for it?'

'One hundred dollars a month,' he said, 'and whatever is going.'

'How do you mean, whatever is going?'

'Well!' he said. 'I mean anything in the line of tips.'

So I went to work in the commissariat. It was very odd. The head cook was a consumptive Swede, and the second cook was a fat Swede. There were three others with me 'handing out the grub.' They were powerful fellows, who looked like gangsters. I think the whole business was most fraudulent. The Italian contractor was making a fortune, giving the workmen bad food, and pocketing the difference. In order that we would not feel inclined to cheat him, he was continually, almost every day, giving us something extra, a dollar or two dollars, sometimes five dollars. No doubt it was extremely shabby to have had any part in the affair. In fact, it is the only time in my life I have been a party to what is called 'legitimate business.' But I was too cynical at that time to mind what I did.

Further, after arriving in that camp, I began to take myself definitely in hand physically, in order to get over my Russian woman. There was a river near by. When I was not working I went down there, and swam and ran and did gymnastics. I stopped smoking. I concentrated entirely on becoming as fit as possible, living like a boxer in strict training. I became a mass of supple muscle from head to foot. That lasted for three weeks.

Suddenly, one evening, while I was in the dining-room serving the men, I heard a tumult in the cook-room. Rushing in, I found the head cook bleeding copiously from a great wound in his forehead. The Italian had gashed him with a knife. Afterwards I learned that the head cook was drunk, having procured

some vile Prohibition liquor, that he had attacked the Italian with a frying-pan, and that the Italian had acted very properly in self-defence. When a Swede runs amuck one must defend oneself at all costs. But as we all liked the head cook and despised the Italian, we took the head cook's part, and left at once in a body. In three weeks I had made about two hundred dollars.

I got back to New York, bought some clothes, and called on my brother. We spent the evening together. I got a room, and said I would come around to see him in the morning. Then I went to bed. It was very hot, and there were bugs in the room, so I could not sleep. I had to sit up all night, thinking of the Russian woman. I left the house early in the morning, and took a train to Atlantic City, which is a popular and rather expensive seaside resort on the New Jersey coast. I have no idea why I went there, except that I had heard the name somewhere. I wanted to escape. From what? The Russian woman? No. I was recovering from the war.

I have often watched a certain insect, whose name I do not know. It crawls along slowly. One touches it. It lies perfectly still, pretending to be dead. After a time it begins to move again. Touch it again. It lies perfectly still. The length of time it remains still depends on the force with which it has been touched.

Once on a strand I watched an insect building a hole for itself with tiny pebbles. I waited until it had finished its hole and had gone inside to rest or to mate or to hatch its eggs; I know not what. Then I placed a tiny pebble in the doorway it had built. It came out,

and took away the pebble, and then retired once more. Again I placed the pebble in the doorway. The same thing happened. I got exhausted before the insect got exhausted.

So does the human soul go on yearning and seeking for the expression of that ultimate beauty of which it contains the germ; on and on, it struggles in spite of difficulties, wounds, disease, and all manner of disaster.

So did my soul, numbed by the war, begin again to dream of that beauty which had become inherent in it at the moment of its birth, and finding the doorway blocked, fluttered about in darkness, dashing its wings against the walls of the cavern that encircled it.

I arrived in Atlantic City. All these towns are alike. Atlantic City is different from most others because the Atlantic Ocean stretches before it. I had one hundred dollars when I arrived there at midday. At six o'clock in the evening I had no money left. So I sat on the promenade watching the people. I was amused by the negroes who wheel rich men in chairs up and down the boardwalk. No white man is allowed to wheel these chairs.

The principal excitement in the town was caused by a rich young woman from Texas who went about the beach dressed in a million dollar bathing suit. I thought there was a quaint similarity between the mentality that created the million dollar bathing suit, and paraded it on a young woman's body, up and down the beach, admired by gaping multitudes, and the mentality of the negroes that wheeled the chairs.

Big Chief. Big Medicine Man. Big Leopard Skin.

Million Dollar Bathing Suit. Million Dollar Pier. Tallest Building in the World.

One feels terrified when confronted with the mania of *Bigness*.

I speak as a European. And we Europeans are terrified and repelled by the American mania for *bigness*, simply because we are old, decadent, and enfeebled by the accumulating weight of our prejudices and traditions, and we are jealous of American youth. Youth always terrifies old age. Old age always tries to maintain its existence against youth by sneers, cunning, and a parade of its subtleties. And even though youth is gauche, ignorant of refinement, boastful, talks in terms of *immensities*, and comports itself generally in a savage manner, it is more beautiful than old age, because all things are possible for it.

Here, therefore, is America, on the threshold of its life, rising up huge and powerful before our eyes, bursting with vitality, a gaunt, leggy fellow, raucous, turbulent. We can still make it eat from our hands like a young bear or lion, which, being but a cub, has not yet learnt to assert its kingliness and smash with a powerful paw those who tease it.

Yet, even as a cub, it has spread out over all the world, suddenly, so that the farthest confines of the earth are familiar with its roar. What shall it do when it has reached maturity? An amazing speculation. Is its destiny to create the greatest civilisation and culture the world has ever seen, or to become perverse and destroy Europe from which it sprang; to turn Europe into a knocking-shop for its debauch as it does now;

to demoralise Europe by buying its brains and its manifold culture, giving poets, musicians, painters, actors, boxers, whores, and acrobats millions for the exercise of their talents? Is England Athens, and is America England's Syracuse? Or is America another Carthage to be fought and conquered by the U.S.S.R. as S.P.Q.R. conquered commercial Carthage? I doubt if history ever repeats itself. I feel that it is my European envy that prompts me to compare America to Syracuse and Carthage. I hope so. And yet these Atlantic Cities and these million dollar bathing suits and negroes wheeling millionaires in chairs are youthful vices which may corrupt growth. Nearly all great individuals began poor. Nearly all great communities began poor. Their road to power was long and slow, and wealth only came to them in their maturity. But again, how can one measure the future by the past?

All hail to this rising America, and even though it turns savage in its manhood and overwhelms our culture in an avalanche of chewing-gum, that avalanche shall go down in history as a truly Gargantuan gesture.

I incline to the belief that America is going to carry on European culture, and carry it on its great shoulders to tremendous heights. Literature? Painting? Sculpture? Architecture? Already American architecture is the most interesting in the world. New York is the only new city in the world that is impressive by its personality. I claim that it is the most interesting city the world has yet seen architecturally. It is very

rare that any community excels in more than one form of art, and the Romans remain a great people without having excelled in any. Unless one considers the art of government among the great arts.

In any case, for me the contemplation of America and its future is the most exciting thing in the world to-day; except the contemplation of American women, who are the most exciting women in the world.

I had no such thoughts that evening as I sat on the beach of Atlantic City. I was penniless, disheartened, and rebellious against life, surrounded by a society which only spoke in terms of things that cost millions of dollars.

Fortunately, thought has a very calming influence on me, and I can sit without movement, brooding, almost as long as an Indian fakir, when I am in the mood. The mind, turning back upon itself, can abolish Atlantic Cities, bathing suits, piers, and negroes that wheel rich men in chairs, and create a wilderness, in which its own personal conception of beauty can roam unhindered and disport itself.

Then suddenly, at about two o'clock in the morning, a man staggered to the seat on which I sat. I looked up. He nodded to me. He had a blotched and bloated face. His necktie was undone. His hat was cocked at a drunken angle on his head. His eyes were bloodshot and sombre, with a stupid melancholy. His clothes were disorderly, and rimed with the relics of debauchery. His fat stomach heaved with the labour of his breathing.

'Here,' I thought, 'is a man more miserable than I.'

He mumbled something in his throat, and sat down beside me.

'Beautiful night,' I said. 'I should like to have a bathe now if one were allowed to bathe without a million dollar bathing suit.'

'Say,' he said, in a drunken fashion. 'Can that bull.'

I shook my head. He also began to shake his head in a violent fashion, and then put both hands to his mouth, and stared wildly at me. Taking away his hands, he spat gloomily into the sand.

'Feel ill?' I said.

He stared at me for a long time in silence. Then he said:

'Know how much money I have spent in forty-eight hours?'

'Have no idea,' I said.

'Twenty thousand bucks,' he said.

'Lot of money,' I said.

'Yep,' he answered. 'Twenty thousand iron men.'

He began to belch.

'Women,' he said. 'Then jakey. Then women. Gets away with it. Goddam. Wish I were dead. Say, fellah? Are you a bull?'

'How do you mean?'

'If you're a bull, get me, here I am. Take me along. I've had enough of it.'

Nothing is more unpleasant than a drunken man. He began to pull me about, entreating me to arrest him. I kept pushing him away, squeezing his ears, his nose, and the tips of his fingers, but it was no use. He was so drunk that nothing could force him to recover

his senses. He went on babbling. Opening the three top buttons of his waistcoat, he showed me an enormous pile of banknotes.

'Must be forty thousand there,' he said. 'See? Got that left yet. I want to make resit–resti–cution. I got away with it pretty slick, but it's no good.'

'What? Did you pinch it?'

'How do ye mean?'

'Did you hold up a bank or something?'

He laughed violently.

'I held up a *town*,' he cried. 'A whole goddam town I stuck up.'

He named a town where he had been serving in an official capacity. I gathered that he had run off with the town's public funds. It was no concern of mine, but I was sorry for the poor devil.

'I have a wife and three kids,' he said. 'What am I to do?'

I shrugged my shoulders. He repeated the question, and shook me violently by the left shoulder. I pushed him away roughly. He rolled aside. His head fell on his chest, and he began to snore.

I felt extremely sorry for him. He had probably wasted a great deal of time, thought, and energy in mustering up courage to take this money. Having taken it, and ruined his career by so doing, he was not enjoying its possession. He was obviously weak, and with a conscience, which he had not the strength of will to keep at peace by living an orderly life. He would never be able to put himself right with society, and the loss of his wife and children would mean so

much to him that he was sure to become a vagrant, and end his life miserably unless he was put in jail. Or else commit suicide? After some thought, I came to the conclusion that suicide was the only possible way for this fellow to get out of the mess in which he had plunged himself by his senseless theft. In his pocket he had enough money to make provision for his wife and children. What if it belonged to the town of B. . . . ? The town could very well get along without the money. Sums immeasurably more vast are stolen every day on Wall Street, in the way of legitimate business, in order to provide for the concubines of financiers.

I shook the man so violently that he woke up. Then I cried out to him with enthusiasm:

'I've got it.'

'What?'

'Listen. The best thing for you to do is to commit suicide. You have enough money in your pocket to fix up your wife and kids. Put it in a bank for them in New York or somewhere, and give them directions how to find it, or go to a lawyer or a clergyman or something like that, and see that they get it. Then do away with yourself quietly. Then you'll be all right. You see, it's the only thing you can do, as you haven't got the guts to steal money. That's obvious.'

He stared at me for a long time, and then he said angrily:

'I'm an American citizen. I know my duty. I may have gone wrong – get me? – but I'm ready to face the consequences. Get me?'

'Don't be a damn fool,' I said. 'If you do that your

wife and children'll have nothing. Can't you see that you'll be better off dead? As you stand now, you're just a common nuisance. Come, my boy, you must realise that you simply *must* shoot yourself. Poison would do just as well. If you go to New York, you can fall off Brooklyn Bridge, or go up in an elevator to the top of the Woolworth Building. It's quite simple.'

'Listen,' he said solemnly. 'You're daft.'

Then he fell sound asleep.

'Damn the lout,' I exclaimed, looking at his puffed, brutish face. 'He has no sense of dignity. Why not take his money, since he is sure to spend it, as he spent the rest, in a few hours, through sheer cowardice? I could live quite elegantly for several months on thirty thousand dollars!'

I toyed with the idea of taking his money for several minutes, and then grew bored with it. As the man irritated me, and because I felt in some way responsible for his misery, since he had spoken to me, I got up, kicked him, and walked away hurriedly. I lay down on the sand at a distance, and went to sleep.

In the morning, when I woke up, I thought of him. I came back to where he had lain on a bench. He was gone. A policeman probably found him asleep and arrested him. I suppose I should have looked after the poor devil.

I could not leave Atlantic City, as I had no money. So I sold my clothes to a Jew. He gave me five dollars, and a suit of dungarees. I went to Philadelphia. There I found an employment bureau, which was hiring men to work in the shipyards at Camden, New Jersey. I

arrived at the camp, and was put to work on a night-shift, which was a curious sort of business. There were about twenty of us. We were supposed to clean away all the debris left after the day's work. But we never did anything except play poker. One man did duty as a lookout. When anybody in authority approached, he warned us. Generally it took us about half an hour in the morning to do the cleaning. And we were paid quite well for it.

We lay in bed most of the day. There was an odd collection of men in our hut, of various nationalities. One man had deserted from the British Navy. Another had deserted from the German Army. An American among us had once been a millionaire. A young Virginian had been sent down from Yale, and gone to rot. They were a very amusing lot of fellows. The former millionaire came from Florida, and told us astonishing stories about the hunting fashionable in that country; also about the incest prevalent among the natives. The German did the goose-step for us, and bragged in an outrageous way about his military experiences. It was very pleasant lying in bed, listening to these fellows talking. I got tired listening to them after a fortnight, and went away. I was getting very restless.

I next engaged myself to work in Dupont's explosive factory. That was a monstrous place. There were thousands of workmen. Some of them had yellow faces and disfigured nails. They told me wild stories about the mortality through accidents among the workers. I myself was put to work loading boxes of

dynamite into trucks. That was the least dangerous job in the factory, though I should not care to take it on now. The carelessness with which they handled the boxes startled me at first. They hurled them into the trucks, just like sacks of flour. After a day or two, I myself hurled them in the same manner.

Even though there was no accident or explosion, one always had the feeling that a great disaster was imminent. It was depressing. There was no gaiety in the place. I left after ten days, and went to New York.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

I RETURN HOME

I HAD had enough of manual labour and wandering. I wanted to get home. On arriving at New York, I went to the club frequented by my brother. He was away in Montreal, but I asked his friends to tell him that I was leaving for Europe.

'Ha!' said one of them. 'You'll be just in time. The Russians are at the gates of Warsaw.'

'In time for what?'

'The world revolution.'

'You believe it's imminent?'

'Yes.'

'Then I may as well stay here.'

'No. Not in America. America will be the last country to have a revolution.'

Suddenly it all appeared utterly ridiculous to me. I laughed aloud, and continued to laugh, almost hysterically, so that they all looked at me in amazement, thinking I was mad. Then I walked out. I got a room, and went to bed. Hiding myself under the bedclothes, I laughed at my ease. Then I sat up after having laughed to satiety, lit a cigarette, and thought.

I was beginning to see myself. I did not yet see myself, nor was I destined to do so for another two years. But this sudden fit of laughter was a sign of the inner madness that was growing on me, forcing me to retire within the walls of my mind, and to abandon active contact with a world in which I was but a straw blown by contrary winds, now hither, now thither, now soaring high on the bosom of a frivolous gust, only to fall limp through a vacuum, and remain stuck on a mud clod, until a horse's hoof and the sun made me pliant to another breeze. Ignorant, without belief, without will to forge the scattered and diverse fragments of my material intellect into such a homogeneous substance as would give me power over my fellows, I was beginning to see that I must remain a wreck; that it was not the war which had made me a wreck, but nature, which had destined me for other things. Greater or less? That mattered nothing. The important thing was to know and to accept.

What, then, was the world revolution to me, who was fit to be no better than a drummer in its wars or the holder of a stirrup for some brass-brained boor to put his foot therein? Now I saw the world and its laws, its wars, its prophets, and the quickly changing countenance of its philosophy as a drama filmed on a globe beyond my being, but turning to my hand and subject for the exercise of my observant vision. Shrinking with a coward's fear from the magnificence of the world's tumult, that arena where strong men battle for power, where gods and the various sciences of government are like pieces of chess in a game played by men whose

nerves are steeled by the greatness of their ambitions, I took refuge in the delicately fashioned world of my imagination. Hidden there from observation, I could build my own castles, and mime the outer strength I lacked with wordy subtlety.

Where? What place could be more remote than the place of my nativity? A rock forgotten by the world. On its bleak rocks I would make my soul dance and rock my songs on the cradle of the great ocean winds that blow against its cliffs, and then set forth into the world armed with a wiser weapon than my hands could wield.

Next morning I went down to the wharves of New York, and was lucky enough to find an English ship that needed a few hands. I signed on as a fireman. The ship was bound first for Rio de Janeiro, and then, after having called along the coast to Buenos Ayres, she was going back to Europe.

Although I had the firm conviction that I was approaching the beginning of something very wonderful in my life, a feeling of extraordinary melancholy began to grow on me as soon as I set foot aboard the ship. Physically I was more fit than I have ever been in my life. My nerves were in good order. But the depression came in spite of that. Because of that depression, my journey to Europe was a debauch from port to port. At Rio, at Santos, at Paranagua, at Rio Grande do Sul, at Montevideo, at Buenos Ayres, at Antwerp, at Hamburg, and at Cardiff, I ran riot among the most insane follies that a seaport town can provide for a seafarer. So that when I arrived home I was like a

ghoul, speechless, gloomy, a companion of the rough winds and of the breakers.

A godless hermit, I began my communion with the cliffs, the birds, the wild animals, and the sea of my native land.

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